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THE STORY OF THE
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THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

BY
MACLEOD YEARSLEY

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to
argue freely according to conscience, above all
other liberties." —MILTON (*Areopagitica*).

LONDON :
WATTS & CO.,
JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.4
1922

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TO
MY SON

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PREFACE

ONE finds by experience that even those who are accounted well-educated and well-read show a woeful ignorance not only of nature and her varied phenomena, but of the working of their own bodies and the origin of their own species. Some have a dim notion that Darwin "said we came from monkeys"—a statement as inaccurate as unjust; but few seem to possess any clear idea of what Evolution really means. To the suggestion that this ignorance might be easily dispelled, the reply is not seldom given that books upon the subject are too long or too technical, or that "there is no time for such studies."

Similar ignorance and apathy exist with regard to religion, and the grotesque myths of cosmogony and doctrine are swallowed in blind faith. Many people feel that conventional religious beliefs are completely at variance with science; some are frankly sceptical as to the teachings of the ordinary clergyman; but few have the moral courage to voice their doubts, and they see nothing dishonouring in avowing that they "leave all that sort of thing to the parsons, who are paid to look after it." By a number of persons religion, in fact, is professed merely as a business or social asset.

I have, therefore, ventured to presume that the following pages, in which the facts concerning the origin of man and the genesis of his religious systems are treated

in the merest outline, may be of service to those who are anxious to know the truth and to pursue it. I have endeavoured to summarize the results of the researches of recognized authorities in several departments of knowledge, with a view to enabling the busy "man in the street" to dispense with the reading of the voluminous literature available. The statements set out may be considered as accepted facts, and, as such, should appeal to all who, anxious to ascertain the truth, can reason without bias and are not intimidated by convention.

That the broad and simple facts of geology, anthropology, and evolution should be made a prominent factor in the education of our youth must be patent to every fair-minded person. That the absurdities of the Biblical cosmogony should be taught daily, in schools and churches, by those who know them to be fabulous cannot be too strongly condemned.

I wish to express my indebtedness to the authors of the works named in the Bibliography, and my special gratitude to my friend Mr. Edward Clodd for his unfailing kindness not only in reading the manuscript, but in freely giving valuable suggestions and advice.

M. Y.

London, April, 1922.

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CHAPTER I

THE EARTH AND MAN

§ 1. *Introduction*

THE Bible has, for several hundred years past, been the chief authority not merely for human conduct and religious belief, but for the conception of the origin of the universe. As such, it was accepted blindly (and is still so accepted by many people) as a book produced by Divine inspiration, the contents of which it were impious to question.

During the past four hundred years, however, there has been growing slowly, but very surely, a suspicion that the Bible contained many things not in accordance with ascertained facts. This suspicion became strengthened as time went on by every important discovery in science, fresh facts springing up of a nature so irreconcilable with "holy writ" that thinking men found it impossible to shut their eyes to them. Theologians, with a tenacity worthy of a better cause, spent fruitless hours in vain endeavours to bring the Bible cosmogony¹ into accord with scientific discovery, only to find that equivocation was of no avail against the cold logic of reason. Geology and biology established their truths to the complete confusion of the stories of the Creation and the Flood. During the past half-century the domain of science has expanded; with the growth of anthropology² it has taken in mythology and history. While scientific men have applied to the stories in the Bible the masses

¹ Greek, *cosmos*, world; *gignomai*, I become, grow.

² Greek, *anthropos*, man; *logos*, discourse.

of knowledge which have been gained by the study of primitive man, his traditions and superstitions, scholars have unravelled the sources from which the scriptures were compiled. A new method, that of Comparative Hierology,¹ has arisen.

But these facts are known to the few rather than to the many. They are not yet a part of our common education, although they ought to be. The old, exploded Biblical cosmogony is still read out in our churches and taught in our schools, as if it was a great and solemn fact, by men who are well aware that they are not teaching the truth. To the ignorance in which the vast majority of people are kept may be added the effect of custom. It is one of the many savage survivals which remain in civilized man to accept the customs and beliefs of those who have gone before. This attitude, when it is not counteracted by active opposition, leads to apathy and disinclination to make the effort which progress demands, especially when questions of religion and superstition are involved.

When ignorance is enforced rather than voluntary, an attempt at its enlightenment must have some effect upon those whose minds are willing to receive and consider fresh knowledge without bias. It is for this reason that this book has been written, and it will be the purpose of the ensuing pages to convey a plain account, in simple language, of the facts which have been ascertained by science concerning the origin of the world and of man, the growth of religious ideas, and the paramount part played by evolution throughout the process. In addition, such particulars will be offered of the great religions other than Christianity as will enable them to be compared fairly with the Old and New Testaments and the religion of which those books are the sacred writings.

¹ Greek, *hieros*, sacred.

§ 2. *The Age of the Earth*

The ideas which existed before the evidences afforded by Geology, Palæontology, and Anthropology had made plain the enormous lapse of time which has occurred since the earth was formed, and man first appeared upon it, were based upon tradition as embodied in the sacred books. The then existing state of knowledge furnished no other foundation. The present year, which is known to Christians as 1922, is considered by the Moslems as 1340, and by Jews as 5682. The Christian reckons from the reputed date of the birth of Christ, the Moslem from that of the flight of Mohammed from Mecca, the Jew from what he believes to be the date of the creation of the world. In old Bibles the world is stated in a marginal note to have been created in the year 4004 B.C.—a date which, added to 1922, would make the age of the universe (since sun, moon, and stars were included in the Mosaic creation) 5926 years, 366 in excess of the Jewish computation. This arbitrary date, the computation of Archbishop Usher, was abandoned in the Revised Version of the Bible as inconsistent with modern knowledge. Dr. Lightfoot (*circa* 1576) eclipsed Usher by stating that the earth was created on October 23, 4004 B.C., at 9 a.m.!

The world is, indeed, immensely older. Primitive human traditions based upon conjecture crumble in the light of progressive knowledge. Astronomy, Geology, and Palæontology have to be consulted if the truth is to be ascertained, and the facts which those sciences have made clear must be examined.

1. ASTRONOMY long ago exploded the idea that the earth was the centre of the universe, with sun, moon, and stars revolving round it for man's sole benefit. It teaches that the earth is a *planet*¹ revolving round the *Sun*, which gives it heat and light. Besides the earth

¹ Greek, *planētēs*, a wanderer.

there are seven other large planets—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Uranus, and Neptune, which also revolve round the sun. Some of these planets have much smaller bodies, called *moons*, revolving round them. Jupiter, for instance, has eight moons, while the earth has only one. There are, besides the eight big planets, several hundred much smaller ones, or *planetoids*. This arrangement of planets and planetoids moving round the sun is called the *Solar System*.

A glance at the sky on a clear night reveals an enormous number of *stars*, which appear as specks of light. Examined through a telescope, they are seen as shining points. Their great distance from the earth prevents any estimation of their size. They number about two thousand million, and the greater part of them are known as *Fixed Stars*, because they all retain the same position in respect to one another. As will be seen presently, these fixed stars are like our sun, and shine with light of their own. Their distance from us is so great that, although many of them are much larger than our sun, they appear to us only as twinkling points of light. The planets shine with a light which is reflected from the sun, and is, therefore, not their own, although it is probable that some of the big planets still possess some light of their own.

Scattered through the heavens are certain misty, patchy clouds of light. Astronomers and chemists have discovered of what stuff they are composed. They are luminous masses in a state of great heat, and are called *nebulae*;¹ and some two hundred thousand are known. It was from just such a cloud that our solar system was made. Opinions are divided at present as to whether these nebulae are composed of gas or solid particles, there being three main hypotheses. These are: the *Nebular Hypothesis*, which considers the cloud to be composed

¹ Latin, *nebula*, a cloud.

mainly of gas; the *Meteoritic Hypothesis*, which suggests it began as an immense swarm of meteors; and the *Planetismal Hypothesis*, in which the nebula consists of a cloud of solid particles, supposed to have come from the ripping open of some dead sun by another star. Which of these three theories is correct matters not, as it is undisputed that star systems are evolved from nebulae. This process is practically as follows. The material of the nebula is in constant motion round its centre, like water stirred in a basin, gradually splitting into rings revolving, one within another, around a central mass. The rings gradually break up into masses until the nebula at last becomes a number of planets whirling rapidly around a central mass, or sun. Such an arrangement is called a *Star*, or *Stellar System*. There are many of them in the heavens, their suns forming the fixed stars; our solar system is one of them. They are in all stages of manufacture, from nebula to complete system; and there are some which, by the gradual loss of energy and the slowing down of their revolving motion, have become cold and dead. Our moon is the best example of this gradual cooling; originally a part of the earth which split off in the early days of the formation of the solar system, it has slowly given up its heat until it has become cold.

2. Astronomy having furnished the knowledge of how the earth was made, GEOLOGY¹ takes up the story. The earth, once formed as a planet in the evolution of the solar system, was first a mass of intensely hot material, which very slowly cooled until it became solid. It passed through several stages; at first a pasty, white-hot mass, it subsided gradually to red-heat. All that part of it which was the most heavy became slowly separated from the lighter stuff to form a core to the revolving ball, the lighter stuff making a crust around it. The process is

¹ Greek, *gē*, earth, and *logos*.

comparable to the separation of the "slag," or earthy material, from the metal in the process of smelting iron ore. We are ignorant as to the exact nature of the earth's centre, but it is formed probably of heavy metals which were smelted out in the very hot stage. The thick outer crust forms the hard surface popularly known as "land."

Besides this land, however, there is on the earth a great quantity of *water*, as oceans, lakes, and rivers. When the globe was in the hot stage, it was surrounded by a dense mass of water in the form of steam, and, as it cooled, this steam cooled with it and became water. In cooling, the earth shrunk, and, with this shrinking, its surface became thrown into wrinkles, like the skin of a dried apple, forming deep hollows in which the water collected, so that finally the earth became a ball of land and water. Even when the earth had thus assumed the form which resembled its present condition, long ages passed before it was possible for living things to exist upon it, and it was in water that life had its beginnings. The details of the processes which prepared the earth for life and the changes which have taken place in its surface must be sought in a work upon Geology.

3. PALÆONTOLOGY.¹—Finally, when the world had reached the stage when living beings could exist upon it, life began. These living things have left their record in what are known as fossils,² the name given to them because they are dug out of the earth's crust in which they lie. Such fossils may be stems and roots of trees, leaves, shells, horny parts of insects, bones, footprints of birds and animals, and so on. From these remains Palæontology reconstructs the kind of life there was in ages past.

It is necessary to review here the animals which preceded man and their relation each to the other, so that some conception may be formed of what man's ancestors were like in past ages.

¹ Greek, *palaïos*, ancient ; *on*, being.

² Latin, *fossilis*, dug up.

Until the middle of the last century it was believed that all the different species of plants and animals were created separately, man being made last of all; that, therefore, species are immutable. But in 1859 Charles Darwin showed this to be an error, and that the various species of plants and animals now living, including man, were formed gradually by means of the perpetuation and accentuation of variations in the individuals of a species. The process took an immense time, and was due to certain natural forces which are always at work. Darwin, arguing upon what man can do by artificial selection in breeding (e.g., pigeons), pointed out that Nature could, infinitely more slowly, do the same by "natural selection." This process is called *The Theory of Evolution*,¹ and the natural forces which bring about these changes have been classified as the five Laws of Evolution, which may be stated briefly thus:—

1. *First Law, Heredity*.—That is, like produces like. Cats do not produce dogs, but cats; that is to say, the young of any animal resemble their parents. The same applies equally to plants.

2. *Second Law, Variation*.—No animals, even though they belong to one kind, are exactly alike; nor are they exactly like their parents. In a litter of kittens no two are precisely similar; even when they resemble each other in colour, there are differences in their markings.

3. *Third Law, More of all Kinds of Plants and Animals come into Being than can Possibly Live*.—The consequence of this leads to the

4. *Fourth Law, The Struggle for Existence*.—This struggle for existence is going on continually. Every plant or animal that comes into the world has to fight for food and other necessities in order to live. The outcome of this struggle is the

5. *Fifth Law, The Fittest Survive*.—That is to say,

¹ Latin, *evolvere*, to unroll.

the beings who are strong enough to win food, or who can best stand the conditions under which they live, are the most likely to go on living and to produce offspring.

It is the continual working of these five laws that has peopled the world with the plants and animals which live upon it to-day. Throughout the long ages since life first came upon the earth, various kinds of animals have been evolved, and have died out because they were unable to fulfil some or all of the laws of evolution. That is to say, better kinds of beings took the place of others because these new forms could more easily obtain food, or stand great heat or cold; and possibly, in course of time, these also failed to adapt themselves to fresh alterations in their surroundings, and so died out and gave place to others.

How the present animal population of the world has come about must now be very briefly sketched.

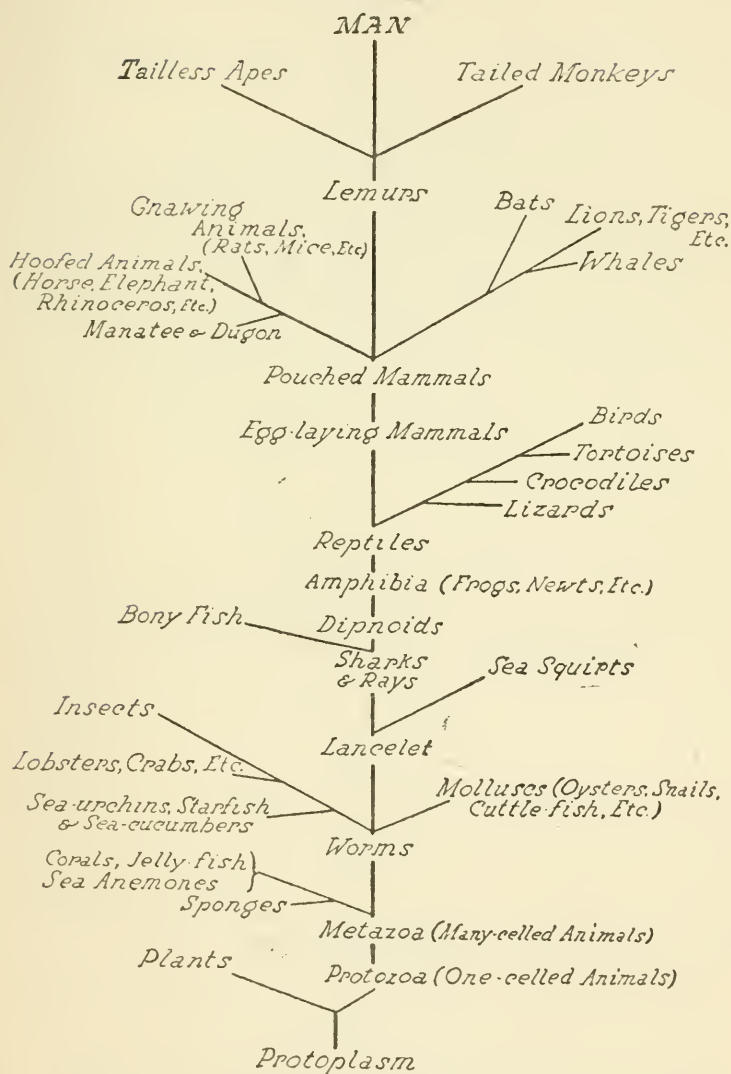
The form in which life first appeared was that of a jelly-like stuff called *protoplasm*.¹ This stuff is the foundation upon which all life depends; it is the basis of all plants and all animals. The most simple animal consists of a speck of protoplasm, containing a rounded body called a *nucleus*, the whole so small as to require a microscope to see it. Such a speck of nucleated protoplasm is called a *cell*. All animals consist of either one or many cells; man himself is a creature built up of an untold number of cells. The simple, one-celled animal is called a *protozoan*²; many-celled animals are distinguished as *metazoa*.³ The latter were probably evolved from the former.

The first metazoa were very simple in structure: sponges, corals, jelly-fish, sea-anemones, and the like. On p. 9 is a chart, or simple "tree of life," which illustrates how the root lay in protoplasm, and how the stem was formed first of one-celled and then of many-

¹ Greek, *protos*, first; *plasma*, moulded.

² Greek, *protos*, first; *zoon*, animal.

³ Greek, *meta*, later.

THE "TREE OF LIFE"

celled animals. The branches indicate how various other creatures were evolved and the form from which they probably sprang. No attempt can be made here to go into the proofs upon which this tree of life is based, as only the briefest outline is intended. Reference must be made to any biological handbook by those who wish for further information and detail.

The next animals were worm-like, and from them branched off (1) Molluscs¹—the oysters, snails, cuttle-fish, etc.; (2) Echinoderms²—the sea-urchins, sea-cucumbers, and star-fish; (3) Crustacea³—lobsters, crabs, and shrimps; and (4) Insects.

Then came an extremely interesting group of animals which show a new character, the forerunner of a great change of form. All the animals mentioned hitherto have soft bodies without bones; although many of them, like the oyster, the sea-urchin, and the lobster, have hard shells to protect them. This new group had a gristly cord running through the body, called the *notochord*.⁴ This is the first stage of a backbone, formed of a number of bones called *vertebræ*.⁵ The interesting little creature with the notochord is a tiny lance-shaped animal found in the sea and called the *Amphioxus*,⁶ or lancelet. From this lancelet came the fishes, first those with a framework, or skeleton, of gristle, like the sharks, skates, and dog-fish; later with a skeleton of bone, as the salmon, cod, and perch. As a side-branch from the lancelet came the jelly-like sea-squirts, which have a notochord only when they are young. Henceforward the animals all have backbones. There are thus two great divisions of animals—the *Vertebrates* (with backbones) and the *Invertebrates* (without backbones).

Then appeared in the tree of life certain fish which became specially adapted to a life in mud, when the

¹ Latin, *mollis*, soft.

² Latin, *echinus*, a hedgehog; *derma*, skin.

³ Latin, *crusta*, a crust.

⁴ Greek, *nōton*, back; *chordē*, string.

⁵ Latin, *vertebra*, a joint.

⁶ Greek, *amphi*, double; *oxys*, sharp.

water ran low from extremely dry seasons. Instead of breathing like other fish by means of slits in the side, or "gills," they have also lungs, so that, to meet successfully the struggle for existence, they came to possess two ways of breathing. Hence they are called *Dipnoids*.¹

From the double-breathing fish were evolved the *Amphibians*,² animals able to live on land or in water, such as the frogs and newts. From these came the *Reptiles*³—the tortoises and turtles, crocodiles, snakes, and lizards. A branch from the reptiles developed into *Birds*.

From the reptiles came the *Mammals*,⁴ which nourish their young by means of milk. The first of these were curious creatures, which, like reptiles and birds, lay eggs. The only examples now living are the spiny ant-eater (*Echidna*) and the duck-billed platypus (*Ornithorhynchus*), which are found only in Australia and New Guinea. From the egg-laying mammals came the pouched mammals, or *Marsupials*,⁵ which carry their immature offspring in a small pocket in the skin. The kangaroo is the best-known example.

From the marsupials came a number of branches, indicated in the tree, only one of which needs special consideration here. This is the group of little tree-living animals called *Lemurs*.⁶ From the lemurs sprang the apes and monkeys, and, what is more important, *Man* himself. Precisely through which branch man was evolved is not yet fully made out, but it is probable that one ape-like ancestor gave rise to branches from which came the gorilla, chimpanzee, orang-utan, gibbon, and the earliest men.

It has now been seen how, by means of evolution, the whole series of animals, ending in man himself, came

¹ Greek, *di*, double; *pneō*, to breathe.

² Greek, *amphi*, double; *bios*, life. ³ Latin, *repto*, to crawl.

⁴ Latin, *mamma*, a breast.

⁵ Greek, *marsupion*, a little pouch.

⁶ Latin, *lemur*, a ghost, in allusion to its nocturnal habits.

into being. The process has taken an enormous time. From the truths which Astronomy, Geology, and Palæontology have revealed it has been estimated that *at least eighty millions of years* went by from the time when the earth was first split off from its parent nebula until that when man first appeared. It is considered by some that the time was even longer, but the estimate given here is the smallest number of years which the process can have taken.

§ 3. *The Length of Time Man has Lived on Earth*

Although it has been shown that it was late in the age of the earth when man first appeared, it must not be considered that he has not been here very long. Some estimate must, therefore, be given of the time which has elapsed since he first lived upon a planet which we have seen is immeasurably more ancient than the 5,926 years of the older speculators.

Like other animals, the men who existed long ages ago have left fossils behind them. Skulls, or parts of skulls, and other bones have been found in caves or in the gravels of ancient rivers, so that geologists and anthropologists have been able to decide with considerable accuracy what these very ancient men were like. Space will not permit more than a brief notice of these primitive men, but reference to Sir Arthur Keith's *Antiquity of Man* will show that, from an examination of existing fossil skulls, man of modern type has existed for an enormous age, which puts back the period of time necessary for his evolution from his ape-like ancestors to a very remote period. Sir Arthur does not consider a million years too great an estimate.

But besides his bones, which decay easily, so that only few of them are found, man has left behind him the implements—the axes, spears, hammers, harpoons, and knives—that he made and used. These are mostly

fashioned out of flint, or other stony material, for it was a very long time before men knew the use of metal.

The general consensus of opinion is that the locality in which man first appeared—the cradle of the race—was somewhere in the Indian Ocean, where land (to which the name of “Lemuria” has been given) has been submerged since man was first evolved, although not within historic times. The earliest men were probably very unlike any of the people, even the lowest savages, that exist to-day. They resembled much more, although they were also different from them, the great apes, the chimpanzees, gorillas, and oranges. They lived in caves, ate roots and nuts, and probably used as weapons sticks and stones picked up haphazard. Later they made their implements out of flint, which they shaped roughly by chipping. They existed for long ages in this condition; but, as time went on, they grew gradually more skilful, and the implements they made became better in workmanship. At some period they became acquainted with the use of fire. How or when this happened is unknown; it may have been from the accidental firing of dead trees or dry grass by lightning, some of which burning stuff they may have saved to keep a fire going for the sake of warmth. At some time or other they learned to make fire for themselves, probably by rubbing two sticks together or by striking two flints one upon another, as some savages do to-day. With better weapons they took to hunting, and, knowing fire, they cooked and ate the animals they killed, using their skins for clothing. The cave men even possessed the art of drawing, scratching pictures of the animals they saw or hunted upon pieces of ivory or slate.

Later on, after about six hundred thousand years¹ of slow progress, men had improved. They had learned

¹ It must be understood that these estimates are approximate only. Anthropological research appears to tend to put man's appearance to a more remote age than was formerly thought.

a great deal of experience by long practice. Their speech had been developing slowly, so that they were better able to hand their experience on to their children. Consequently their existence became gradually easier, and they were beginning to live more comfortably. They still made weapons and implements of flint and stone, but they ground their edges and polished their surfaces. They made bows and arrows, too, and harpoons and picks of stags' horn. They had now learned to weave cloth for garments, to make pottery to hold food and water. They were hunters or fishers, and they also tried to cultivate some kind of corn. One of the most important things they did was to tame the dog, which has been the "friend of man" ever since. This important advance for man's comfort probably arose from making friends with stray wolves. Cases may have arisen in which a hungry or wounded wolf was kindly treated and fed, and attached itself to man out of gratitude. Later on men domesticated cattle. This word "domesticated" comes from the Latin *domus*, and means to make a "house-friend."

The earliest stage of man's progress is called the *Stone Age*, and this is divided into an older stone, or *Palæolithic*,¹ age, and a later, more advanced, new stone, or *Neolithic*,² age. It is now generally accepted that before the palæolithic there was an *Eolithic*,³ age, when man made the very roughly chipped flints found by the late Mr. Benjamin Harrison in the remains of ancient river gravels on the chalk plateau in Kent and Sussex and elsewhere. Other implements, tending to connect these eoliths with early palæoliths in an evolutionary series, have been found in the weald of Sussex by Mr. Harry Morris. Moreover, there must have been a still earlier period when he had not even reached flint work. These

¹ Greek, *palaios*, ancient ; *lithos*, stone.

² Greek, *neos*, new.

³ Greek, *eos*, dawn.

stone ages are "ages of man" that Shakespeare never dreamed of. It must be understood that they do not refer to periods of time, but to degrees of advancement.

At last men discovered metals, and when this happened they began to go ahead much faster. At first they employed *Copper*, but this metal was much too soft to be serviceable. They learned quickly to mix it with *tin*, and thus made *bronze*. With the Bronze Age very much greater progress was made. Men began to live together in larger numbers than before. In the Stone Age the cave dwellers had gradually given up their caves for rough huts; then two or three huts had grown into a collection big enough to be called a village. For a long time men thus lived in small village communities, sometimes built out upon a lake, on piles, to be more secure. With the Bronze Age many of the village communities had expanded into towns, and some of the towns into cities. The simple huts had been gradually replaced by houses which, during the age of bronze, became in time more and more elaborate until they reached the size and stateliness of the dwellings found in Egypt, Assyria, Rome, and Athens. All this took, of course, a very great deal of time, and was but a part of the gradual advances men made in skill of workmanship and comfort of living. So soon as the village communities reached any size men began to depend more upon each other. Thus classes, like those of fisher, hunter, warrior, flint-worker, etc., gradually began, and the foundations of social intercourse and social order were laid. Men found that when they wanted something that one man could make more skilfully than they, it was better to offer him for it things he could not make so well rather than to waste time trying to make it for themselves. So *barter* came about, gradually to grow into *commerce*.

Thus life grew more complicated, and language developed enormously. With this increasing complexity

of the Bronze Age there came about an invention which was necessary with the greater social intercourse and the beginnings of trade and commerce. It was something which made a greater change in human life than had ever been before or has ever been since. This was the invention of *writing*, whereby men could put on record the things they did and the thoughts they thought, so that those who came afterwards could read what their forefathers had done and known. Thus knowledge did not die altogether with its possessor, and so the wisdom of generations could accumulate. How great an influence this had on man's progress will be seen later.

The art of writing, however, was not invented, as the ancients thought, at once. It grew by evolution from small beginnings, like everything else. It is quite impossible to say in what age writing began, because its evolution must have been very slow. As a matter of fact, one might say that the first cave-man who thought to pick up a sharp flint and scratch upon the cave wall a rough outline of the bison he had seen was the inventor of writing. The alphabet from which all our words are formed had its origin in pictures, and the earliest known writing was picture writing. The evolution of writing from the picture will receive more detailed attention in a later chapter.

Last of all, *iron* was discovered—an event which meant a very great deal to man's advancement. All the wonderful machines and inventions which seem almost matters of course at the present day became possible through the discovery of iron and how to work it.

Thus, just as the earth has passed through all its stages from the nebula to the present-day distribution of land and water, so has man progressed from the use of sticks and stones to steam engines, battleships, and aeroplanes. These stages of man's evolution are called the *Stone Age*, the *Bronze Age*, and the *Iron Age*, and it is in the Iron Age that we are living. Naturally, the more skilful men

became, the better weapons and implements they made, and the faster they moved forward. It is certain that they improved much more rapidly in the Neolithic Age, and yet more so during the Bronze Age. As far as is known at present, about six hundred thousand years passed between the first ape-like men and the end of the Stone Age, and only about thirty thousand years between that and the termination of the Bronze Age. These computations are only approximate, and are probably much under- rather than over-estimated. So far the Iron Age has lasted a little over three thousand years.

If these three periods be added together, the shortest time in which man can have existed upon the earth is about *six hundred and thirty-three thousand years*—a period very different to that assigned (not merely for the duration of man's sojourn upon the globe, but for the age of the whole universe) by those whose only foundation for the calculation existed in their imaginations. Under the old ideas, based upon myths¹ and ancient tales to be discussed later, man had less than six thousand years in which to achieve his present condition of civilization. But the careful, patient toil of men of science has made it clear, not only that man progressed very slowly, but that he has had at least one hundred times longer in which to do so than was formerly believed. Professor Keith, as has been stated, inclines rather to a million years for the process.

But when we talk of the progress of man from very early times up to his present state of civilization, it must not be thought that all men have progressed at the same rate. There have been ups and downs, old civilizations have been destroyed or have died out, and new ones have arisen. There are races of men to-day who have never got beyond the primitive state. In India, in mid-Africa,

¹ Greek, *mythos*, a legend.

in Australia, and in some of the South Sea Islands are savages who still use stone implements. They are the stragglers who have dropped out in the long wanderings and migrations of primitive peoples before civilization was attained. They have not advanced, either because they were incapable of improvement or because they were in some manner cut off from the opportunities which other races have enjoyed. Many, like the Australian "black-fellows," some of the tribes of Central Africa, and those who inhabit the islands of the Pacific Ocean, were isolated from other races until within very recent times. By the study of such savage peoples some conception can be obtained of what our own far-off ancestors were like. We can learn from their customs and ways of thinking how many of our own customs and ideas first came about. We can realize the many savage survivals that modern man shows at every turn—mental survivals as patent to the skilled observer as are to the biologist the traces of animal ancestry that we carry in our bodily structure. Just as comparative anatomy lays bare the facts of animal evolution, so does a study of savage mentality elucidate many of the myths and legends that will be dealt with later, and is of great assistance in making clear the origin and evolution of religious beliefs.

§ 4. *Man's Habit of Asking Questions*

We must now seek to ascertain why men have made the progress that has just been sketched; why they have gone so much further than the other animals.

It is clear that man *thinks* about things; indeed, there is reason to believe that the word *man* is derived from an ancient root word meaning *to think*. But man is not the only animal which thinks. Many other animals think, although probably most of them can do so only vaguely. Opportunities occur every day for proving the truth of this fact of animal thought. The dog knows clearly when

he has done wrong, and will avoid his master because of it. A well-trained dog will often do what he is told in a most surprising manner. That dogs, cats, horses, elephants, seals, and monkeys can be trained to work or to perform tricks is a matter of common knowledge. But there is a limit to their powers of thought, and no other animal, however well trained, has ever progressed like man. Therefore it is evident that man has not reached his improved condition solely by thinking. It has been said that one of the characters which distinguish man from all other living creatures is that he is a tool-using animal. It is true that the ability to use his hands has been of inestimable advantage to him; and it is also true that parrots and elephants are highly intelligent because the former can use their claws and the latter their trunks for grasping in much the same way as we use our hands. But this does not help to answer the question. Monkeys will employ a stone for cracking hard nuts, and there are some wasps which beat down the earth over the burrows in which they have laid their eggs by holding a tiny fragment of stone between their jaws. Therefore the tool-using argument does not assist us, and some other solution of the problem must be sought. Careful study of comparative psychology shows that many of the acts of apparent reasoning in animals are merely plain sensory associations of recorded with recurrent stimuli; that animals reason unconsciously and not consciously, while man, alone of all animals, can reason in both ways.

It is also true that many animals communicate with one another by making sounds, and that this might, in a sense, be called "animal speech." But the sounds they make are so limited in number, and can express only such conditions as anger, terror, hunger, contentment, warning, or love, that they can hardly be compared to human speech. It must, however, be remembered that communication by sounds in animals is only a part of the evolution which has resulted in human speech. It may

be said, therefore, that one great fact is that man can think so much better than the other animals because he is able to *speak*. Speech assists him to clear his thoughts, and gives him some vehicle in which to express them and communicate his thoughts to his fellows. It is speech that enables him to reason consciously as well as unconsciously. Men are thus able to *discuss* things among themselves. Another great fact that so greatly distinguishes man from all other beings is the faculty which we all possess of *asking questions*. This is the greatest fact of all. The lowest kinds of men, the most primitive savages, are highly inquisitive concerning new things and things they do not understand. They will ask all kinds of questions about everything they see, just as children are always asking questions about this, that, and the other—why the sky is blue, where the rain comes from, what the wind says, and the like. Children begin to ask questions as soon as they have acquired sufficient command of speech to express their thoughts. Savages are just like children: their minds have not “grown up” like those of civilized people; they are intellectual “Peter Pans.” But they have the potentiality for improvement, because they can talk about things and exchange thoughts with one another. If they can find no one to ask who knows more than they, they will put questions to themselves. The questions that a savage will ask himself are much the same as those of children. Lacking a guide to instruct him, he will formulate replies of his own. He will decide, for example, that the wind is some great spirit who is talking to him; when it is high and making a howling noise he will tell himself that this great spirit is in pain or is angry with him. The difficulty is that he is prone to “jump to conclusions,” to consider the answer he has thought of is the only correct one. Worse still, he may be angry with any one who thinks differently, and this has been the cause of much trouble and unhappiness in the world.

The importance of this will be seen in due course. The fact to bear in mind is that *man differs from all other animals because he is the only one that can ask questions.*

In studying the various animals which have been evolved, one cannot but be struck by the fact that so many have become *specialized*; some for strength, as the elephant, some for combat, as the stag, some for swiftness of movement, as the horse and greyhound, some for endurance, as the camel, and so on. Man has specialized in *brain*; and since, as Professor Keith and others have shown, the special characters of the human brain must have been evolved very early in his existence as a separate species, primitive man must long have possessed the potentialities for his extraordinary progress. One of the most striking features in the skulls of early men are certain *pithecoïd*, or ape-like, characters. Yet the brains of these men were distinctly human, and, as Professor Elliot Smith has said, the last part of man to be polished up was his face. All things considered, he is still on the upward grade; what he may become can only be conjectured; but, as we shall point out, it is computed by mathematicians that the world has still another ten million years to go. If man has reached his present position in one million years, he may have still greater possibilities before him.

CHAPTER II

MAN'S FIRST SEARCH FOR EXPLANATIONS

§ 1. *Man's Earliest Questions*

A BRIEF description has now been given of the making of the earth, the appearance upon it of life in plants and animals, and of the process of evolution which led to the advent of man. His progress has been sketched rapidly, and due emphasis laid upon the enormous time that it occupied. Lastly, it has been pointed out that man differs from all other animals by the special size and quality of his brain, to which is due his faculty of inquiry, of asking questions. The next task is to discuss the character of his earliest questions, using the knowledge which has accumulated from the study of existing primitive races. For this it will be necessary to go back a little, and to consider what sort of creature man was when he first came to inhabit the earth, and how he progressed in his ability to think.

Probably the very earliest men were but a slight degree better than the great apes. In the beginning they must have had little or no speech in which to express their thoughts. The oldest skulls found tend to prove this. Indeed, it is doubtful whether their ways of expression were anything more than those of the "animal speech" already mentioned.¹ It is likely that grunts,

¹ Professor Elliot Smith, in his address as President of the Anthropological Section of the British Association at Dundee, 1912, is of opinion that the human brain must have reached almost its full development, and that speech was probably in full process of evolution, before the jawbone, tongue, and other parts which subserve the purposes of speech had become finally and fully adapted to their new functions. With this opinion Sir A. Keith (*Antiquity of Man*, p. 244) agrees. If this be so, speech must have been well developed in early Paleolithic times.

snarls, and chuckles, eked out by grimaces and gestures, formed man's chief method of expressing himself. His power of thinking was not great and his thoughts must have been very vague.

It is very probable that man at first classed himself among the many other animals; that as far as his thoughts went he simply considered himself as one of them. He was in the stage of possessing only a direct knowledge of the things he saw, or heard, or felt, and thought no more about his own separate existence than does a very young child.

Man possessed the instinct of family life from the first; and, as the family increased, the life of the tribe developed. Man is naturally *gregarious*¹—that is to say, he prefers to live in company with other men. As men multiplied, the number of tribes increased; and, with this increase, the struggle for existence and the difficulties of obtaining sufficient food became more intense, so that tribe struggled with tribe for the bare necessities of life, and the weaker ones went under. Moreover, the search for a living tended to migration, causing men to spread themselves over wider tracts of country, following the lines along which the land was most fertile and suitable to their wants. The common need compelled them to realize the importance of helping one another, and that the safety and well-being of the tribe depended upon mutual co-operation and assistance. Consequently, man began to understand that if he lives for himself and his own comfort only, and does not remember to be careful to act so as not to injure and annoy his fellows, he will come to grief. That is to say, he began to learn the necessity of unselfishness, of kindness to others, of self-sacrifice, of "give and take," in the common life of the tribe. Working together was the only thing that could make the tribe successful. Thus developed the "tribal

¹ Latin, *grex*, a flock.

instinct" (to grow, ages later, into the national instinct, with all that the word "patriotism" conveys), when the tribe became everything to its members, and all strangers were considered as enemies.

§ 2. *Speech and Thought*

The progress of man through the family to the tribe (itself only a much bigger family) was largely due to the development of articulate speech.¹ The necessity for understanding one another better gave man the need to invent words which he could use to put his thoughts into shape. At the beginning many of these words were imitations of natural sounds, as the American Indian word *baim-wa-wa* for "thunder," and possibly also the Egyptian *mau* for "cat." When he was able to do this his ideas became more clear to him. We cannot imagine the possibility of any one thinking of something without a word or words to express it. The sight of a knife, for example, immediately conjures up the word "knife" in the mind, even though the word itself is not spoken. Other words come into our thoughts also when we see a knife, such as "cut," "sharp," and the like. In fact, the one object calls up a whole train of thoughts and ideas. But this train of thoughts has become possible only after long ages of progressive speech, and could not have happened with the first men.

Speech has been described as "the garment in which we clothe our thoughts." It is better, perhaps, to say that *words are the symbols of thought*. This conveys better the conception that, without words to represent them, even to ourselves, our thoughts would be nebulous indeed. When speech first began, therefore, man's thinking must have been of a very vague nature, and probably it was a long time before he could reason clearly

¹ Latin, *articulatus*, divided into joints—i.e., speech divided up into syllables.

enough to begin to put questions to himself or to other men concerning the objects around him. Until he developed sufficient speech to enable him to think clearly, he took everything he saw for granted. Speech develops memory and reflection; primeval speech must have been so limited as to permit but small range of reflection. Once man had a stock of words for the expression of his thoughts, he was able to ask questions.

§ 3. *The Earliest Questions*

The stage reached in which there was real intercourse between men by means of speech, putting questions became possible, and this has never ceased. Man was really beginning to look around him and to wonder concerning the things he saw. From this time onward *he wanted to account for all he saw and felt when he was awake or asleep*. He had all the varied voices of nature to speculate upon. There were the sigh of the wind in the trees, the murmur of the brook, the roar of the sea. The volcano belched its flames and overflowed its torrents of fiery lava, the lightning split trees and rived rocks, and the thunder boomed and crashed, shaking the earth with its reverberations. What was the meaning of it all? There were hundreds of things going on around this latest achievement of evolution, some hideous and terrifying, some beautiful and pleasing: he wanted an explanation of them all. Last night he slumbered heavily in his cave and a friend had visited him, with whom he talked. When he awoke it was to remember that but a short time before he had seen that friend crushed by the fall of a tree. How was it that he could have talked with him again? Also, why had the tree fallen and crushed him? Possibly on the following night he dreamed again. This time it was of a hunt, when he tracked an animal and killed it with some favourite rough weapon. Turning this over in his

immature mind when he was awake, he recollected how he had killed that animal before; he knew it because it had only one ear, the other had been torn off in combat with some larger and fiercer beast. The very weapon with which he had slain it had been broken soon after. Yet but a few moments ago he had killed that same quarry again, and with the same weapon. What did it mean? How had it happened? He had gone to sleep in his cave and had awakened there; he had not even changed his position. Perhaps a companion awake in the cave assured him he had never left it. Yet he *must* have been absent some time, for the place where he had killed his prey was some distance off, and he *knew* he had been there since he went to sleep. He had recognized the trees and the river. Such a dream must have been a sore puzzle to these primitive men and the cause of much argument. Probably the dreamer spoke of it to other men, and they told him of their own similar mysterious experiences. With what animated gestures and excited grunts they must have discussed the matter, waving their arms and eking out their still scanty stock of words by acting to one another the things they had seen and done, just as savages to-day will act when they attempt to explain some event in their experience.

§ 4. *Explanations*

Such must have been the class of questions that primitive men asked first; how did they endeavour to answer them? The conclusion they came to, judging by their modern representatives, was that all the objects they saw about them—beasts, birds, trees, rocks, stones—were *like themselves*. Everything was as much *alive* as they. There is nothing strange in this, especially in the case of animals and birds. Any one who sees them run or fly, eat and sleep, who hears their squeaks and cries, would know them to be alive. The problem is no more

difficult to the primitive mind as regards trees, rocks, and stones. Very small children think anything that moves (a mechanical doll, for instance) is alive, and will talk to it as to a living thing. When it is realized that these early men were in the childhood of existence, it is equally reasonable that they should feel that the things which we know to be inanimate were really living. In the case of trees (which are, indeed, alive) the wind moves their boughs and rustles their leaves, and they appear to make creaking and sighing noises, especially at night. Then there are the echoes among the mountains, while stones and large rocks come rushing and roaring down the hillsides. Rivers and streams make sounds, and their waters flow. Volcanoes rumble and roar, the rain hisses down, thunder crashes, the wind makes a variety of noises. It is no wonder, therefore, that all things seemed alive to primitive men; they are thought to be animate by many savages that exist to-day.

Therefore, men explained these things by telling themselves and each other that every natural object had a "spirit" or "ghost"; not only men and other animals, but trees, stones, rocks, volcanoes, and the wind as well; in fact, everything in nature. The wind was a great spirit talking; the spirit of the river murmured when it was pleased, or roared when angry and dashed its waves against its banks. The spirits of the trees talked among themselves when their leaves rustled; the echoes were the voices of the hill spirits calling to one another. Such belief in *nature spirits* is very widespread among savages, and was probably the earliest explanation of nature that man invented. It forms one of our many savage survivals, making children beat the thing which annoys or hurts them, and grown men kick viciously at the stool over which they stumble.

§ 5. *Naturism*

But there was a period before that in which man invented any such explanation; a time when he was more truly a part of nature than he is now; when, as it were, he and the other animals met upon common ground. This requires some explanation before proceeding further.

It has already been seen that there has never been any break in the line of life which, beginning with the simple, one-celled animal, has led from protoplasm up to man. Man is made of exactly the same stuff and on the same plan as all other animals. What people do not so readily understand is that there is also *no break between man and other animals as regards the faculty of the mind*. Man's mind is so much a part of the animal system that it is not possible to study him apart from other creatures. Therefore the impressions made upon early man by the objects around him must have been just like those made upon other animals.

One chief result of these impressions must have been that of *fear*, and the effect of fear upon children and ignorant people is to give them a sense of some unknown and unseen power which permeates the universe and for which they are unprepared.

Studies of primitive people living in the Indian jungle have shown that this indistinct fear of some mysterious nature-power is their only idea of natural things. They have as yet reached no explanation of nature which suggests anything *personal* in the way of spirits that deliberately hurt or help them. This primitive condition is called *Naturism* (or, as it comes before the idea of spirits, *Pre-animism*). Its root-idea is one of vague, but threatening, power everywhere. The world is not yet thought of as full of spirits, but as just simply alive. It was only when the mind of man became more developed that he began to separate himself and all the other

objects in nature into two parts, bodily and spiritual, and to conceive of a "natural" and a "supernatural." Naturism links up human with animal psychology.

§ 6. *Animism*

The idea that all natural objects have spirits is called *Animism*,¹ a conception that has exercised a very widespread influence in the world and led to many remarkable developments in superstition and worship that cannot be entered into here. In the dreams described above, it was in the first case the spirit of the dreamer's friend that had spoken to him, the ghost of the man who had been crushed by the tree. The man who dreamed of him would probably conclude that his friend had grievously offended the spirit of the tree, which had revenged itself by falling upon and killing him. In the second dream it was the spirit of the beast the hunter had killed which he pursued and slew anew; the dream-weapon he had used was the spirit of the weapon he had broken. Quite naturally also he would think that it was his own spirit which had wandered away during sleep and had done these things, leaving his body to rest quietly in the cave while it hunted of its own accord.

This belief in animism rules the life of the savage. Primitive man had none of the advantages that we have now; he had no one to explain the matters which he did not understand. With his limited comprehension, he had to find out everything for himself, and he made mistakes which took ages to correct; some of these errors are being put right only now, while the survival of others is responsible for the majority of our modern superstitions. Most men, for example, still talk of the natural results of the laws of nature as "Providence." The conception that everything possessed a "spirit" of its own led to many

¹ Latin, *anima*, a spirit.

beliefs which made men act in a manner which, while seeming to them perfectly reasonable in the light of these beliefs, appears foolish, often cruel, to our eyes. Some of the results of the belief in animism, such as human sacrifice, will require notice later. •

There were, moreover, many daily occurrences which appeared to the primitive mind to strengthen convincingly the belief in animism. When a man looked into the water of a lake or pool, he could see himself as in a mirror. He saw not only his own reflection, but those of other men, their weapons, the natural objects round about them, and the birds flying overhead. Everything, again, himself included, had its shadow, which never left its owner. The shadows of objects which, like himself, could move, moved with them. They vanished only when it grew dark, or the weather was cloudy. The fact that the shadow of something which, like a tree or rock, always remained in one place, moved round it and changed its dimensions at different times of the day, was to man but a further proof that it was alive, since he was completely ignorant of the fact that such alterations were a consequence of the position of the sun. It was but natural, therefore, that man connected these shadows and reflections in the water with the "spirits" belonging to the objects which cast them, and that he believed these spirits to be their cause. Indeed, from such shadows and reflections he came to the conclusion that everything had a "second-self," or "spirit-double," which followed it about, but could separate from its owner at times. Hence he attributed a great importance to shadows, believing that they could exert the same influence over people and things as could their owners. From this belief arose the multitude of savage superstitions concerning shadows, many of which superstitions were common in medieval Europe, and of which Chamisso's story of the "Shadowless Man" is a well-known example.

§ 7. *Sleep and Death*

Lastly, there was the fact of death. Primitive man saw his fellows and other animals die, and knew that when this occurred they ceased to breathe. The natural conclusion was that the breath was the spirit which animated their bodies. Moreover, when people sleep soundly, breathing becomes quiet and shallow; so quiet that it is not always an easy matter to know that they are breathing at all. As people wake, they begin to breathe more deeply, giving vent to sighs and grunts; and they commence to move, twisting and turning their bodies. These facts further strengthened early man in his belief in spirits. Sleep and death appeared so much alike. Evidently the spirit could leave the body in sleep and return to it when it awoke. That was the reason, it appeared to early man, why people sleeping soundly no longer breathed. When the spirit returned and re-entered the body, it caused it to move and make a noise. When it was away from its owner it could act independently in dreams, which are real to the savage,¹ without the body participating in its actions. The awakening from sound sleep is generally a comparatively slow process, and savages fear to arouse a person suddenly lest the spirit should experience difficulty in returning into the body. Moreover, if the spirit could leave its owner's body during sleep and return at will, it must go away from him when he died, the only difference being that the absence was temporary in the former instance and permanent in the latter. The one explanation that man could conceive was that there must be a future life. The idea of the savage is that the dead continue their life here in ghostly form; he has no supernatural belief, no setting

¹ Cardinall (*The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, Lond., 1920, p. 43) says that among the Kassena and neighbouring tribes all sorts of deeds performed in dreams are "regarded by the dreamer as deeds really performed—at times rather a complication in court cases."

up of nature against supernature. Hence the spirits of the dead might plague the living and require to be driven away or prevented from doing harm by offerings and gifts. It is not until much later on in evolution that the savage distinguishes between a natural world here and a spiritual world elsewhere. Therefore, as man pondered these matters more and more, he argued that, as the spirit came back after sleep, so it might return after death; and, acting upon this supposition, he began to bury the dead with greater care, placing in their graves such things as belonged to them and that they might need when the spirit returned. That this conception came comparatively early is suggested by the evident interments met with in early palæolithic times.

There is another interesting point concerning these primitive burials. It was usual to *break* any object which was to be placed with the dead. Some savages follow this practice in the present day. What is the reason? Probably death from disease or old age was as rare with early man as it is with modern primitive savages. When they died, they were killed in fight or by wild beasts, or from such other causes as crushing by falling trees or rocks, or by falling from a height. They were hurt—*broken*. So when any object—a flint implement, for example—was broken, it was no longer of any use; it was *dead*. Therefore these men *killed* the things that were to be buried with their dead owner in order that their spirits might be set free to help that of the deceased. With some savage tribes, in the case of chiefs and headmen, it is usual to kill their wives and slaves and bury them around the chief, so that their spirits may serve him in the spirit world as their owners served him when living.

§ 8. *Ghosts and Magic*

A step further must now be taken. Since a man's spirit or ghost could wander about doing things while

he was alive or asleep, there could be no reason why it should not act similarly when he was dead. It was considered, as has been said, that a spirit, once it had left a man's dead body, continued to inhabit the world of the living in ghostly form. It might wander away and merely "haunt" its old home by occasional visits, or it might return into the world of the living in a fresh embodiment. In the latter event it could effect its purpose by entering another body. Since it is a very common idea among savages that conception is the result of the entry of a spirit into the mother, the usual method was to return in the body of a new-born infant and to inhabit it throughout the life of its host, not leaving it until death, when it became again a disembodied spirit. The fact that a child showed a likeness to a dead parent, grandparent, or other relative, tended to support this belief. Or the spirit might elect to inhabit an animal, a tree, or even a rock or stone. Such a course would appear perfectly reasonable to men who believed that every object they saw possessed a spirit. The idea gave rise to the belief in the "transmigration of souls," still held by many persons, both among savages and the more ignorant of civilized peoples. In the Malay Peninsula the soul of a magician is supposed to enter into the body of a tiger, and Skeat and Blagden give an interesting description of the process.¹

Further, since spirits could do all these things, they were equally capable of taking possession of a man's body when he was asleep and his own spirit was away engaged upon some little private excursion of its own. Savages believe that there are always lurking spirits ready to seize the opportunity to enter the body of a man when he is at a disadvantage, as when he is too suddenly awakened for his own spirit to have time to get back. This "possession" of a man's body was considered as

¹ *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (Lond.; Macmillan ; 1906), ii, 351.

accounting for madness, fits, or other nervous disorders—a belief that survived well into such highly civilized periods as Roman times, as shown by some of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, and by the story of the Gadarene swine.

In fact, there was no end to what a spirit might do; and, since men are good or bad, powerful or weak, so the spirits of men, animals, and things were beneficent or malignant. They could, it was believed, work a great deal of good or a great deal of harm; they were capable of loving or hating, avenging neglect or injury, showing gratitude and rewarding kindness. Hence, if a man offended the spirit of a rock or a tree, it might revenge itself by falling upon and killing him when he was unprepared.

To savages (and it must be remembered that the early men who were our remote ancestors in this country were savages too) there is no such thing as accident or disease. Every injury, every kind of death that can befall a man, is due to a spirit, save when it is owing to the act of another man, as when one warrior slays another in fight. The lightning that strikes, the rock that crushes, the beast of prey that tears and devours, all are spirits. A savage is not drowned by falling into a river and being unable to swim; it is the spirit of the water that seizes and strangles him. Similarly, every disease is the work of some evil spirit or is due to witchcraft, concerning which something will be said presently.

Thus early man, like savages now existing, lived in a world full of all kinds of spirits or ghosts, good and evil. They filled his whole life, requiring to be reckoned with in everything he undertook. They could not only understand his spoken words, but had the power to read his very thoughts. To him it was not the rain and sun that made his fruit and corn to grow and ripen for his food; not the tempest that destroyed his hut; not the tree that gave him shade. It was the spirits of the sun and rain, the storm and tree, that helped or harmed

him. Early man was well aware that if he required the assistance of some person more powerful than himself the best way to go to work was to persuade him to do what he desired by supplication, or by offering him something he wanted in exchange or that would be to his advantage. Or, if he had incurred the other's anger, to endeavour to placate him by promises or gifts. As a matter of course, therefore, he approached the spirits in the same way, seeking by prayer, offering, and sacrifice to induce them to grant his desires. That is to say, he began to *worship* them after a fashion. In every way that he could devise, he strove to attract the attention of beneficent spirits, to please the powerful ones, or to ward off the bad influences of those whose nature was maleficent. Thus, when he ate the fruit of a tree, he would leave some part of it for the tree-spirit; when he gathered his scanty crops he sacrificed something to the earth-spirit in the belief that he received them from it, and that his offering would induce it to grant him another good crop in the future. He had not then realized the orderly round of the seasons, because their succession was at too great intervals, and the memory of the savage is a short one. He understood day and night, since these were a matter of hours only. Therefore he held that, unless the earth-spirit were propitiated, it might be angered and refuse to yield him the crops upon which he so greatly depended for food.

The life of early man being beset with hardship and exposed to many dangers, the majority of the spirits which surrounded him appeared to be evil, and it was, consequently, the maleficent spirits that he most feared and had greatest reason to propitiate or render harmless. The good spirits were by nature beneficent and helpful, easily contented with thanks and small gifts. It was the evil ones that he had to persuade, and out of his efforts to bend them to his purpose grew what is called *magic* or *witchcraft*.

From all that has been said it can be inferred that primitive man had no knowledge, such as is possessed by his descendants, of the real causes underlying the workings of nature. He considered that everything going on around him was the work of spirits, whose nature was similar to his own. It was this confusion between the spirit idea (animism) and the ordinary operations of nature that led to the system of magic.

The ideas upon which magic was built up were two. First, that *like produces like*—i.e., that an effect resembles its cause (“homœopathic magic”); second, that things which have once been in *contact* continue to act upon each other even after that contact has been broken (“contact magic”).¹ Examples will make this explanation more clear. Thus, the idea that “like produces like” is used by the savage witch-doctor, or medicine-man, when he seeks to “make rain”—that is, to induce the rain-spirit to send a shower when it is badly needed. He knows that when there is thunder rain generally accompanies it and falls in a shower on the ground. Therefore he rattles peas or small stones in a hollow gourd, thus making a noise which he fancies resembles that of thunder, and pours water on the earth to represent the falling of rain. The modern savage devil-doctor, however, usually endeavours to postpone operations until his weather experience tells him that rain is likely to occur—an example followed by a certain country parson who resisted the supplication of his farmer parishioners to pray for rain as long as the wind remained in an unfavourable quarter. To take another example, when the medicine man desires to injure some one he constructs a little image of him in clay or other material, and believes that by sticking thorns or knives into it the man will suffer precisely as if the thorns or knives were inserted into him. This belief was universal in medieval

¹ These two theories are branches of what is called “Sympathetic Magic.”

times, and still survives among ignorant peasants in outlying districts of the Continent and in the Highlands of Scotland¹ at the present day. The province of homœopathic magic is very wide, extending, among other things, to medicine, in which, to take an instance, the plant called "eyebright" was considered to be a sovereign remedy for eye diseases because its flower resembled an eye. "In Germany yellow turnips, gold coins, gold rings, saffron, and other yellow things, are still esteemed remedies for jaundice."²

To take an example of the second magical idea—that things which have once been in contact will continue to act upon each other after the contact is broken—the medicine man believes that, provided he can obtain some object which a person has worn, or some part of his body, such as his blood, spittle, hair, or the parings of his nails, he can affect that person by injuring or destroying it.

Among the parts of a man that can be employed for purposes of "contact" magic is his *name*, which savages consider to be an essential part of himself. This branch of sorcery can only be touched upon here; it will be found very ably and amply discussed in Mr. Clodd's recent work, *Magic in Names*. It is necessary, however, to point out that to primitive man his name is no mere label of identity, but a very real part of himself. The savage, therefore, keeps his name a strict secret, going usually by some nickname, because he believes that if any badly-disposed person learns it he can use it to work magic to its owner's harm. This belief in the magic of names has led to an extraordinary number of superstitions, not least among which is the universal custom of making the name of a god into something mysterious and secret, not lightly to be spoken, and with which all kinds of magic can be wrought.

But the study of this great system of magic is so large

¹ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i, 17. ² Frazer, *Magical Origin of Kings*, p. 49.

and complicated that no more than this brief sketch can be given here. Those who would pursue the subject will find in Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* practically everything that is to be said concerning it. The belief in magic was due to a wrong idea of nature and the laws governing the natural world.¹ The greater and more correct knowledge which is now possessed, and which is growing daily more complete, demonstrates the error of the old conceptions. Yet early peoples who practised magic did so because they believed in it. They were doing their best to understand the natural phenomena concerning which they were continually asking themselves questions. By doing so they were really paving the way for science; indeed, it may be truly said that these witch-doctors and medicine-men were the forerunners of the scientific men of to-day.

So by means of magic early man strove to bend nature to his will, to coerce the spirits in which he believed into granting his desires. And out of these endeavours to coax or compel good and evil spirits grew the prayers, the rites, and ceremonies of *religion*. It was in *fear*, therefore, that religion began, by endeavouring to influence malevolent spirits that were ever ready to injure mankind, so that they might not do him evil. The conception of a god who loved and could be loved came much later in man's progress; it has not been reached even now by savage races.

§ 9. *The Origin of Kings and Priests*

The practice of magic not only paved the way for science, but also was mainly responsible for the origin of kings and priests. Like other branches of the study, this is a complicated subject, of which only a very rough outline can be given here.²

¹ The modern stuff that goes by the name of "Spiritualism" is no better.

² The reader who would pursue it is referred to Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *The Magical Origin of Kings*.

Probably in the beginning every man was his own priest, and such dealings as he had with spirits he carried out for himself. This is the condition of affairs pertaining among many living primitive tribes (as in Australia) as far as their personal gods are concerned, and it has survived among civilized peoples as private prayer. But as the ideas about spirits and the best methods of propitiating or coercing them grew, they became so intricate that as time went on a period arrived when a special class of experts was required to carry out all the magic rites and ceremonies that were considered necessary. In families and small tribes this might be done by the father or head man, who thus became a species of chief, or king, and priest combined. Later there developed a regular class of men whose special office was to deal with spirits. They followed no other occupation, they studied the subject, and often their knowledge was handed down from father to son. Such men among savage races are called "shamans," "magicians," "sorcerers," "wizards," "witch-doctors," "devil-doctors," or "medicine-men," and to become one often entails a long training. These experts were the forerunners of priesthoods. In savage races the ruler, or king, is the chief sorcerer of them all, and in many countries, both primitive and civilized, the king is the head of the religion.

As the religious idea became more and more elaborated in course of time, the conception developed that the priest-king was himself the incarnation or habitation of the most important and powerful spirit, or god, of the tribe, and thus he came to be worshipped as a god. In this conception probably lies the origin of the so-called "divine right" of kings, so that "the divinity which doth hedge a king" was no mere empty phrase. It gave rise to a large number of the beliefs and ceremonies of different religions, which have dominated mankind in many ages. The Pharaoh of Egypt, for example, was

believed to be a god, was worshipped as a god; his statues were placed among those of the gods, and with them received the adoration of his subjects. He was considered to be the son of Heru-ur—i.e., Horus the Great, the oldest of all the gods of Egypt.

One of the results of this belief in the divinity of kings led to the idea among primitive peoples (the early Romans, for example, who were Animists) that when the king became old and infirm the god required a new and more active body, and the king whom he inhabited was, therefore, killed so that the god might enter a younger and stronger man. In some cases he was put to death by his successor :—

The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain.¹

§ 10. *Fasting and Trance and the Ideas Concerning Them*

The life of the savage and of early man was, as has been said, one of hardship and ceaseless struggle for existence, not only with other tribes, but with the immense world of spirits which they created for themselves. Scarcity of game to hunt or a bad fruit season resulted in difficulties in obtaining food, which often entailed famine and fasting. The brains of those who were faint from hunger became tired and weak from insufficient nourishment, rendering them liable to hallucinations and bad dreams, during which they rambled in speech or gave vent to the wild incoherencies of delirium. Similar effects were induced by certain poisonous plants and intoxicating drinks. Early man, like modern savages, must have been acquainted with such results of fasting and poisoning. To the primitive mind incoherent talk is regarded as due to spirit possession, and the medicine man takes advantage of this, believing that,

¹ *Lays of Ancient Rome* : "The Battle of Lake Regillus."

by abstention from food or by eating certain drugs, or "medicine," he can enter into communication with the spirit world. He thinks that either a spirit then possesses him and can say what it wishes to say through him, or that during artificially-induced sleep or trance he can send his own spirit to mingle for a time with other spirits in the world of ghosts, to return when he awakes and communicate to him all it has seen or heard there.

Fasting and the ingestion of drugs have been employed by religious enthusiasts in all times and all ages ; they are practised to-day by savage medicine-men, Indian fakirs or "holy men," Buddhist and Christian monks and priests. No doubt most of the medicine-men believed that they really did speak, because a spirit or god possessed them ; but some did not so delude themselves, and turned their practices to account by deceiving the credulous. By such means they could aggrandize their own power and increase the fear with which the ignorant regarded them, thus gathering riches, honour, and high rank in the tribe. Being supposed to have special knowledge of and power over the spirits, good or bad, they were in a position easily to satisfy motives of personal revenge or dislike by threatening people with them, or frightening others into the conviction that they were ill and would die unless they bribed the medicine-man to save them. The tremendous effects of fear upon the primitive mind are well known to students of anthropology, and many cases are on record in which the mere knowledge of having transgressed some religious prohibition, or that a sorcerer has worked a spell against them, has been sufficient to cause their death from sheer fright.

§ 11. *The Origin of Doctors*

Since all diseases were supposed to be due to evil spirits, the medicine-man was also the doctor of his tribe. Since he was believed to possess the power to send his own spirit to visit and communicate with the

spirit-world, he must also be able to drive out spirits which had entered other people. By this means he could expel the demons of disease—an operation which he often pretended to effect. With the help of a little conjuring, supported by incantations, he could exhibit to the sufferer the spirit which had tormented him, in the form of a small stone or crystal, said to have been extracted from him by magic. Among savages all disease is supernatural and all medicine is magic. The present-day belief in quack remedies is a survival.

§ 12. *Man's Next Questions*

As time went on and man began to find it more easy to express himself by means of spoken language, his ability to think increased, and he was able to construct more elaborate solutions to the problems which occupied him. He began, therefore, to extend his inquiries and to invent further answers. His first need—some explanation of the operations of nature—he had met by the invention of ghosts and spirits. This craving satisfied, he commenced to think more concerning himself, and turned to subjects which presented greater difficulties. Whence had he come, and why? This was one of the problems that confronted him. Another was how death came originally into the world. As has been said, he attributed the facts of disease and death to witchcraft and malignant spirits; but their power to cause death must have originated somewhere and at some time. It was to questions like these that he now sought replies.

Both problems have occupied man since very early times, and inquiry must be made as to how he endeavoured to answer them; for a knowledge of his explanations will assist greatly in the elucidation of some of the stories contained in the Bible.

What occurred when man started to ponder the questions was that he began to make guesses about

them and to invent stories to explain them. He knew nothing whatever about the origin of the world, or the appearance of life upon it, as described in our first chapter, and he was so engrossed with the conception he had already formed about spirits that they filled his mind to the prejudice of anything approaching clear reasoning. Hence the guesses he made and the stories he invented were often absurd and fantastic. These *myths* (Greek, *mythos*, legend) are to be found in the traditions of every race and nation, and there is a remarkable similarity in the myths of different peoples, however widely those peoples may be separated.

§ 13. *Myths about Man's Origin*

It was but natural that primitive man should be highly interested in the question, "How did we get here?" It has been asked by every race that has existed; even such simple peoples as the Australian blackfellows and the Bushmen of Africa have invented stories to account for their origin.

The legends told by all primitive folk as to the origin of man are very much alike, and they can all be classified in two groups. Either some great or powerful spirit fashioned men and women out of earth or clay and then gave them life, or else men and women grew out of some other animal or from a tree. A few examples will make this clear.

The Semites, the race from which originated the Jews, believed that a god made the first man out of earth and fashioned the first woman from one of this first man's ribs. That is the story found in the Old Testament (*Genesis*, ii). The people of Tahiti and some other parts of Polynesia, the Karens of Burma, and the Tartars, among many other races, tell much the same story. The ancient Greeks taught that Prometheus, and the Egyptians that the god Khnoumou, made men from clay with the

aid of a potter's wheel. The Indians of Mexico, Peru, and Paraguay, and the Melanesians of the Pacific, said that man was moulded from red clay. The Bantu tribes of Western Africa say that their god created man, plants, animals, and the earth, and then took no further interest in them.

These few examples are taken from a large number of legends, most of which differ in matters of detail. Thus the Tartars think that a devil and not a god was responsible for making woman out of the first man's rib, while the Indian tribe of Koumis believes that the god was assisted by a dog in his work of creating man.

As examples of the second group of legends (called by Sir James Frazer the evolutionary type¹) concerning man's origin, many American Indians believe that he was not created but evolved from some other form of animal. In West Africa and Borneo it was said that men came from fish; in the Celebes from apes; among the Kayans from trees; and in the Moluccas from both trees and animals. In some of the islands of the Pacific it was thought that man came from fish and grubs; while in Central Australia many tribes believe that they are descended from such rudimentary creatures as worms and caterpillars.

In a few savage myths the two forms of story are mixed up. The Santals, for example, possess a tale that two birds were the first created beings, that they then raised the earth up out of the water and laid their eggs upon it, and from these eggs were hatched the earliest human beings.

With many peoples, all over the world, each tribe venerates some bird, beast, or other animal which is sacred to it, or from which the members of the tribe believe themselves to be descended. These sacred objects

¹ The numerous creation myths are dealt with exhaustively in Sir James's *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*.

are called *Totems*,¹ and each tribe regards its totem as the friend or guardian spirit of its members. Care is taken that it is never harmed, or even eaten, by any member of the tribe.

§ 14. *How Death Came into the World*

The second problem that, it has been suggested, occupied the speculations of early men was: How did death first occur? They must have wondered why it was that a blow from a club, a thrust of a spear, or the piercing of the chest by an arrow should have liberated the spirit which inhabited a man, sending it away never to return, and leaving the body cold and stiff.

Towards such a question they acted precisely as they had done when confronted with the riddle of whence they came.

Just as has been seen in dealing with myths concerning creation, a large number of legends were invented about death; and these, too, all bear a close resemblance one to another. In some of them the myth teaches that the first man and woman were created immortal, but that they lost this gift of immortality in some way. Either they disobeyed the god, or the loss was brought about by the jealousy or stupidity of a serpent, a lizard, a chameleon, an insect, or some other animal.

The story related in the book of *Genesis* of the fall of man and his expulsion, with the woman, from the Garden of Eden because they disobeyed the god by eating a fruit which he had forbidden them to touch, a disobedience into which they were tempted by a serpent, is the ancient Semitic example of this class of myth.

It is the curious belief of a very large number of different races that the animals which, like snakes, lizards,

¹ An American-Indian (Ojibway) word, meaning "family."

and insects, can cast their skins and grow new ones are immortal.

Myths of the fall of man and his consequent loss of immortality differ as to the exact way in which he was misled. In some examples he was cheated of his gifts either deliberately or by an error on the part of the messenger sent by the god. But in nearly all the stories the messenger was some animal which has the power of renewing its skin. The bearing of this peculiarity will be shown in Chapter V, § 2, when the myths concerning the fall of man will be more fully discussed.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRED TRADITIONS

§ 1. *How Primitive Ideas Took Shape as Gods*

It has been seen how man, having passed through a phase (Naturism) in which he considered himself, in a vague way, as one with nature, believing only in impalpable, impersonal powers, had reached a stage in his development (Animism) in which he endeavoured to account for the operations of nature by the invention of a crowd of spirits. These, he implicitly believed, deliberately interfered with him to his injury, or, less frequently, contributed to his well-being. He was obliged, therefore, to influence them by means of force (magic), bribery (offerings and sacrifices), entreaty (prayers), or flattery (praise). He had, further, done his best to answer, by drawing upon his imagination, the more complicated questions (as that of his origin) which began to occupy his attention.

These attempts, clumsy as they may seem to us, exercised nevertheless a lasting influence upon the life of the whole race. From the one originated the multitude of gods that have been and are worshipped in various parts of the world; while the other eventually gave rise to the numerous "sacred" writings which have been venerated and fought over during the few thousand years of what is called "history."

How these developments occurred must now be explained, dealing first with the belief in gods.

Of the multitudes of spirits in which man believed during the period of Animism those which appeared to him most powerful, most difficult to persuade, or most useful, gradually came to be considered as more important

than the others. The spirit of the storm or the volcano, for example, would be to primitive man, as to modern savages, much more powerful and difficult of persuasion ; while the spirits of vegetation (trees, corn, etc.), upon which he depended to a large extent for his food, were clearly most useful.

As has been seen (and it is a point which must be emphasized), *fear* was the most dominant feeling in the primitive mind, because man was ignorant of natural causes, and what is not understood is always feared. It is the unknown that is ever the object of most dread ; and fear, born of ignorance, is the mother of superstition. Thunder and lightning, tempest, volcano and earthquake, fire, the sea with its irresistible tides and mighty waves, rivers with their sudden floods, must have been terrible phenomena to the early races ; and it can easily be understood that their spirits required to be counteracted by magic or appeased with offerings and prayers. The realization of the regular recurrence of the seasons, of rains in tropical countries, or of the tides must have taken a considerable time ; and it must have been impeded by unusual occurrences, such as storms and earthquakes. Men, indeed, lived in a state of continual fear as to what might happen next. This fear led to that belief in the *supernatural* which the less educated section of many civilized races have not shaken off even in these days of knowledge of natural causes. A more practical education, in which the rudiments of natural science are taught in place of old myths whose only title to credence lies in their supposed inspiration, alone can eliminate the many superstitions which exist actively to-day.

What spirits first played an important part in the life of primitive man is not known. Much would depend upon circumstances : a race living inland, for example, would be ignorant of the mighty forces of the sea, while those inhabiting flat countries would have no conception of great mountains whose rugged and desolate fastnesses

and mysterious echoes suggested the abode of great and terrible spirits.

Another circumstance which influenced the importance of special spirits was the degree of culture to which man had reached. He was first a hunter, a *nomad* wandering in search of game or pasture for such herds as he possessed, and having no fixed abode. It was not until he reached the stage of *agriculture*, in which he depended for food upon the crops he cultivated, that the sun and moon began to influence his actions: to him they were gods. In some regions of the world the moon was considered to be of much greater importance than the sun, for two reasons. Owing to the heat given off by the earth during the night, when the sun's warmth is no longer acting, its surface cools and the water vapour in the air condenses and collects upon the ground as dew. Hence the moon was believed to be the great giver of moisture to the earth, without which vegetation could not flourish. The second reason was that the months into which the year is divided were regulated by the changes of the moon, so that the satellite was supposed to govern the periods of the growth of the corn and vegetables which supplied man's food. Moon-worship prevailed also among nomads, since the sun dried up their pastures, while the moon appeared to refresh them with moisture.

With the worship of the moon there gradually grew up an important belief in *spirits of vegetation and of the earth*. The former were worshipped as tree and corn spirits, the two being often recognized as one. Thus the Greek god Dionysus (the Bacchus of the Romans) was venerated as a tree, a corn, and a vine spirit. The earth itself became in course of time worshipped as the great "Earth-mother," upon whom man was not only dependent for his food, but from which he was himself produced and to which he must in time return. It was but a step to the consideration of the earth as the goddess of fertility

in all its manifestations. Thus to the great crowd of malevolent spirits, always on the watch for an opportunity to work evil upon man, were added many good, beneficent spirits which helped him and gave him the things necessary to his existence. The idea of vegetation spirits was a universal one, and practically the same, save for a few differences in detail, in such widely separated countries as Europe and America. It is easy to understand how the budding of leaves, growing into luxuriant foliage at one period of the year, drooping, withering, and falling at another until the trees were bare and the land was naked, was conceived as due to a spirit which periodically was born, grew up, and died; and that the germinating of the seed, the appearance of the green stalks, their growth into tall corn which ripened into ears of ruddy gold, were due to a similar spirit. Hence arose the belief in tree and corn spirits that lived, died, and were buried in the earth, to be born again in the spring. Such spirits were considered as kindly disposed, giving freely to man of their wealth of fruit and grain, and were worshipped as such. From this belief sprang a great number of cults, distinguished by solemn ceremonies, largely mixed with magic, to ensure that the spirits should not resent neglect, but should continue their bounty. The idea was a perfectly reasonable one to the mind of primitive man. It was believed that the corn spirit was killed every year on the cutting of the harvest, and that in the seed which was sown for the next year's crop he came to life again. This led to the sacrifice of men or animals, parts of which were eaten and parts buried with the seed corn to ensure a good harvest. The idea survives in many harvest customs in various parts of the world to-day, although their origin is completely forgotten by those who practise them. In the failure of the corn-spirit to supply man with food and its renewed life in the next crop may be found the origin of the conception of a saviour-god, with its mechanism of sacrifice for humanity and resurrection.

These beliefs became more and more elaborated by the thinking members of the race until the spirits were gradually metamorphosed into beings in the likeness of men and women ; that is to say, they became *anthropomorphic*.¹ Another step was made, and man began to think of spirits as like himself ; he invented gods in his own image. Yet later he went to the opposite extreme, and the belief became inverted, so that it was the god who fashioned man in his own likeness.

But while the more intellectual men endeavoured to improve and elevate the ideas of gods and spirits and alter the supposed meanings of the ceremonies and worship paid to them, the great mass of the ignorant, common people lagged behind, keeping to the older and more primitive beliefs. These older beliefs kept up by the common people form the main bulk of the half-magical, half-religious traditions and practices known as "Folk-lore,"² which often becomes unmeaning unless its origin is understood. It is, therefore, to the common people—the peasantry of a country as well as to primitive savages—that one must turn to understand the evolution of religions. Indeed, it is a fact that all men may be divided into two classes: the thinkers and the common people. The former are those who have developed the great historical religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Brahmanism. These are the outcome of great minds striving after ideals of morality and truth ; but their conceptions are too lofty to move greatly the common men. These latter, although they may accept such religions because they are imposed upon them by the thinkers who lead them, cling stoutly to the more ancient beliefs in evil spirits—the ideas of Animism. Of the Hindoos, who profess Brahmanism, ninety per cent. live out their lives in perpetual fear of evil spirits. The same is true of the

¹ Greek, *anthropos*, man ; *morphē*, form.

² Anglo-Saxon, *folc*, people ; *lār*, learning.

great mass of the Cingalese, the Burmans, and Koreans, all of whom are Buddhists. The majority of the Turks and Arabs, who are Mohammedans, hold the same beliefs and tell stories of genie and devils which are for ever seeking to injure mankind, but can be compelled by magic to help those who have the means to command their services, as did Aladdin by his lamp and ring. Among the Christian peoples, the Finns, Albanians, the ignorant peasants of France, Germany, and Switzerland still believe in a multitude of spirits and goblins which require to be bribed not to injure them. The folk-lore of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland abounds with fairies, pixies, and hobgoblins, showing that similar beliefs flourished until very recently, although the gradual spread of education is slowly eliminating them. Many of the fairy stories that are told to children originated in these remnants of Animism—relics of the beliefs of our primitive ancestors.

§ 2. *Myths and their Transmission*

It has been explained that primitive man invented stories to account for the various problems that vexed his mind and for which he sought solutions. The questions comprised in the “creation” and the “fall,” which have been brought forward as illustrations of these myths, are but two examples out of many, and their construction came about in much the same way as did the invention of spirits. These myths may be divided, roughly, into six classes:—

1. Myths of *Origin*, as those which account for man's presence upon earth, his “fall,” or the variation in the languages of different races. As will be seen later, the acquisition of speech was such a natural and slow process that man took it for granted, and formed no myths to account for it.

2. Myths concerning *unusual natural events*, as the account of Noah's flood.

3. Myths of *Observation*—that is, those which account for some peculiar natural formation. A rock, for example, bearing some general resemblance to a man, would become the subject of a story constructed to account for the likeness by suggesting that the rock had been originally a man who was changed by a god into stone in punishment for some offence. Probably the legend of Lot's wife was a myth of this class.

4. Myths of *History*, stories told concerning a tribe or nation (as of the origin of the Greeks from Hellen), or to account for the superiority of some particular tribe.

5. Myths about *Persons*, stories told concerning individuals (who may or may not have existed) who achieved fame by valorous deeds or wisdom. The traditions of the wisdom of Solomon and the legends of William Tell and King Arthur are examples of these.

6. Myths made to explain *Ceremonies*, or *Customs*, the real origin of which had been forgotten.

Instances of these different classes of myth will occur for explanation and discussion in the course of this book. What is required now is to show the manner in which they were handed down until they reached the form of the legends existing to-day in sacred writings, including the Bible.

When men told their ideas concerning gods, spirits, and their myths explanatory of the problems which occupied their thoughts, they did so to each other and to their children, who repeated them. Thus these stories became *Traditions*, handed on by *transmission*. At the outset this handing on was by means of *oral transmission*, or word of mouth, and it must be remarked here that before written records became possible men's memories for tradition were more tenacious than they are now.

The oral transmission of traditions continued for long ages, children learning them from their parents and

teaching them later to their own offspring. The stories were probably related in a kind of "sing-song," which acted as an aid to memory, just as savages tell their legends when seated round the camp-fire at night. From this "sing-song" method gradually developed singing and poetry; the songs of primitive peoples being largely concerned with gods, heroes, and great deeds.

In the days when men were still living in families, and when tribes were yet small, these traditions would naturally be believed by the members, who would accept them with respect mingled with fear: this was the beginning of their becoming *sacred*.

Since two persons rarely remember a thing so as to repeat it exactly alike, these traditions were probably slightly varied in the telling, not necessarily with intention, although individuals possessing more lively imaginations might add small details. As time went on, the stories would naturally become elaborated. They would also have added to them portions of actual tribal history, distorted, perhaps, to make them appear more remarkable and more redounding to the credit of the tribe.

Thus gradually were developed tribal myths, as separate from the more ordinary tales about gods and spirits. When, as has been pointed out, a special class of experts in the form of medicine-men and wizards arose, the more important traditions concerning gods, origins, and the tribe would be taken over by them, to be narrated only on special occasions. Such an occasion would be the "initiation" of the young men, when, after performing certain ceremonies, often with the addition of severe tests of endurance, they were considered to enter into full membership of the tribe. In this way certain tribal and other traditions developed into *mysteries*,¹ which tended further to enhance their sacred nature and make them not

¹ Greek, *mystērion*, from *myo*, to close the lips and eyes; hence, something that must not usually be spoken about or seen.

to be questioned. We shall also now comprehend how the general feeling aroused by what is not understood is still one of fear.¹ The men who had charge of the traditions would further add to, alter, and elaborate them, either for the purpose of increasing their own influence, or of magnifying the importance of the tribe. No priesthood in the history of mankind has been deterred from such courses by any consideration for truth. Only a knowledge of such portions of the traditions would be permitted to the ordinary members of the community as the chiefs and medicine-men (often one and the same) thought it fit for them to know, the more important parts being kept secret for transmission to those who succeeded them in office.

¹ "Fear, in sooth, takes such a hold of all mortals, because they see so many operations go on in earth and heaven, the courses of which they can in no way understand."—Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, bk. i, 151-4.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRED WRITINGS

§ 1. *The Origin of Writing*

ONE of the most remarkable developments in the progress of man has been that of writing. As might be expected, this art did not, like Athênê springing fully armed from the head of Zeus, come into existence all at once. Several attempts have been made to account for its existence by attributing it to the founder, or "culture-hero" (often worshipped as a "teaching-god"), of the people who possessed it. In an Irish legend, Ogmios (a Celtic deity of Agriculture) is the inventor of writing, while in the Northern Saga it is Odin who first devised the inscriptions known as "runes." In Egypt the god Thoth was believed to have invented the art of writing, and Cadmus was credited by the Greeks with the introduction into Greece, from Phœnicia or Egypt, of an alphabet of sixteen letters.

It was mentioned in Chapter I that as early as Palæolithic times man scratched pictures with a sharp flint on slate, ivory, or bone, or upon the walls of his cave; and it is from picture-drawing that writing is derived. Indeed, man has been a sign-maker for long ages. Primitive races draw pictures for various purposes now. Australian savages carve curious representations of men, animals, and other objects upon rocks; while the Bushmen of Africa make similar pictures by painting with rough pigments upon sandstone. Both races are among the lowest types of men now living. American Indians also draw pictures upon bark cut from trees, etc. None of these

drawings are executed for art's sake, merely to please the eye; they are done for a special purpose, which will be duly explained.

The evolution of writing has been divided, roughly, into the following four stages :—

1. *Aids to Memory*.—Some object is used for reckoning, sending messages, keeping rough records, accrediting a messenger, or for purposes of magic. A very common form is that of a knotted cord, like the “quipus” of the Peruvian Indians. This is largely employed among savages in the islands of the Pacific and China Sea, by the Palonis of California, and in West Africa. Such knotted strings are employed much in the same way as a modern civilized man ties knots in his handkerchief to serve as reminders of small items that he fears he may forget. Probably a very ancient form of memory-aid, they were used by the ancient Egyptians, and the method is mentioned by Herodotus as being employed by Darius. Some races use beadwork, the *wampum* of the American Indians being an instance. A familiar example of the use of beads as an aid to memory is the rosary fingered by Roman Catholics and Buddhists in reciting their prayers.

Another form of memory-aid is the cutting of notches in sticks. Such objects, called “message sticks,” are used by natives of Africa and Australia. They are also used for reckoning, and down to the early years of the nineteenth century were employed, as “tallies,” in this country for keeping Exchequer accounts of money lent by persons to the Government. The burning of large numbers of Exchequer tallies in the Great Fire of London, representing in the Excise alone the value of £136,422, caused confusion in the accounts. The destruction by fire of the Houses of Parliament in 1834 resulted from the overheating of stoves by the burning of an accumulation of tally-sticks.

2. *Pictorial*.—It has already been pointed out that

picture-drawings by primitive man were not made merely for the sake of art. They served a variety of useful purposes—for magic; for records of slain enemies and animals killed in the chase, or deeds of great chiefs; as a means of identifying people, as in tattooing; and for communication as messages.

3. *Symbolic, or Ideographic*.¹—Picture-writing was gradually converted into a kind of shorthand, in which the pictures became mere scrawls, bearing but a rough likeness to the original. They thus formed symbols intended to convey the original idea of the picture. This occurred in many different peoples; it is shown among the Red Indians of America, the ancient populations of South America, in ancient Egypt, etc. The Egyptians, who, perhaps, furnish the best example, developed three forms of writing—the *Hieroglyphic*, a pictorial writing used for sacred rituals and records of kings and gods, carved on stone, etc., or written on papyrus; the *Hieratic*, written on papyrus, and used only by the priests; and the *Demotic*, a popular form for keeping common records, accounts, etc.²

4. *Phonetic*, in which the picture became a conventional sign which represented the sound either of a word, a syllable, or a single letter. It is in this stage that an alphabet comes into existence.

The evolution of writing will, perhaps, be made more clear if it is explained that in the *pictorial stage* the picture looked at suggests to the mind the thing actually represented; in the *ideographic stage* the picture, which has become a very rough outline, suggests its name; and in the *phonetic stage* the now conventional sign into which the picture has changed suggests the sound.

These four stages were, of course, not separated by any line of demarcation; they ran naturally one into another

¹ Greek, *idea*, an idea; *grapho*, to draw.

² These three words are derived respectively from the Greek words *hieros*, sacred; *glypho*, to carve; *hieraticos*, sacred; and *demos*, people.

and overlapped. Moreover, some living races are still in the primitive memory-aid stage, and have not developed writing; others are in the pictorial stage (Australians); others in the pictorial and ideographic stages (American Indians); while some, like the Chinese, have never progressed to the stage of an alphabet at all, although they have possessed the art of writing for over two thousand years.

§ 2. *The Development and Spread of Writing*

We must be content with this short sketch of the manner in which the art of writing originated, and we will now see in what way, once it had been acquired, it developed and spread. Later the important question of its influence upon mankind must be briefly discussed.

Once some form of writing had come into use, it furnished man with a means, more or less permanent, by which he could preserve his thoughts with some possibility of their being transmitted more accurately. He could not, however, wholly guard against alterations, made accidentally by the mistakes of those who copied, or intentionally by interested persons anxious to distort, until the advent of the art of printing.

Writing was early made by carving on stone, scratching on slate, or on tablets coated with wax. It was also done (as it is still by some savages) on the bark of trees. The word "book" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *boc*, meaning tablets of the bark of the beech tree, used for writing upon. The Latin *liber*, a book (from which the word "library" is obtained), meant the inner rind of a tree, prepared for use as paper. The word "paper" itself comes from the plant *papyrus*, which in Egypt was made into rolls of paper. Many papyrus rolls have been preserved, and are often of great length; the famous Harris papyrus, now in the British Museum, measures

135 feet long by 1 foot 5 inches wide. Writing was also inscribed upon specially prepared skins; these were called "parchment," from Pergamos, the town in Asia Minor where they were first prepared. The pictures or letters were painted upon these materials, and the word "ink" is derived from the Latin *tinctora*, a paint. Reeds and quills were used for the purpose, the word "pen" being the abbreviation of the Latin *penna*, a feather. Books were not made at first in the form in which they are now familiar, but in long sheets of bark, paper, or parchment, which were rolled up when not in use; and it is from the Latin *volumen*, a roll, that the word "volume" is derived.

Besides these more familiar and universal materials for writing upon, there are numerous documents preserved which are inscribed upon potsherds ("ostraka"), used in later Egyptian periods, as well as writings made by stamping upon clay tablets, afterwards baked. The latter method was used by the Babylonians.

For long ages the art of writing was kept secret by priesthoods. It was not practised by kings and great men, but was confined to one class called *scribes*, who were usually either priests or closely connected with the priesthood. Kings and nobles did not know how to write their names, and were accustomed to sign documents with a seal or the impression of the thumb. Even as late as the Middle Ages in this country men who did not belong to religious bodies (priests, monks, and the like) were unable to write, and it is only within recent times that education has made the art of writing general. Hence oral transmission continued long, and is still the only method of handing down traditions among primitive peoples who do not possess the art of writing.

The fact that writing was kept so long in the hands of one special class, and that records were made entirely by hand in *manuscript*, caused books to be rare and regarded as objects of wonder. Among peoples

who were in a high state of civilization, like the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, large numbers of scribes were kept hard at work making copies of important books and documents; but even by this means any considerable number of copies was not possible, so that books were not common. The word "scripture" is derived from the Latin *scriptus*, written, and was applied to writing done by scribes. The position of these scribes was one of great power and importance, and to injure or kill a scribe was considered as a most serious offence, punishable with death.

Owing to the comparative rarity of written records, the fact that the art of writing was kept secret from the majority, and that this art was accounted for as having been imparted to the people who employed it by its founder (generally regarded as a god), writings were long looked upon with reverence and awe. To-day among primitive tribes anything written is regarded with terror as mysterious and connected with magic, and writing is an object of awe even among illiterate peasants. Hence the "sacred" nature of scriptures, as in the case of carefully guarded traditions orally transmitted, was maintained and enhanced.

A number of ancient manuscripts have been preserved, but far greater quantities have been destroyed in wars and in conquests by barbarous peoples who looked upon them as mysterious and magical. Many others have been destroyed by priesthoods of different religions, on the plea that they contained matters dangerous to the religion which happened to be at that time in the ascendant.

§ 3. *The Art of Printing*

A great advance in writing was accomplished by the invention of printing. Lecky, the historian, has said that "Printing has secured the intellectual achievements of the past, and furnished a sure guarantee of

future progress;" a remark pregnant with truth, since without the ability, by means of printing, to produce books in large numbers, education upon a great scale would have been impossible.

Printing was first accomplished by means of carved blocks, and was known to the Chinese at an early period. It came into use in Europe in the twelfth century C.E. for ornamenting cloth and other fabrics; and in the fourteenth century playing-cards were printed. But the first real advance was not made until the fifteenth century, when Coster and Gutenberg invented movable blocks, each carved with a single letter, which could be put together to form words. The word "type," applied to these blocks (made of wood or metal) used in printing, is derived from the Greek *typos*, a pattern. The first book printed by this method in English was *The History of Troy*, between 1471 and 1474. It was published at Bruges, and was not printed in England until 1475, by William Caxton, at Westminster Abbey. The art of printing has, therefore, existed in Europe for less than five hundred years. When one reflects upon the rapid advances in civilization which have taken place in this short space of time the tremendous influence which printing has had upon man's progress can be realized. Books, once so rare because produced only with great labour in manuscript, are now within the reach of all, although this has been possible only within the last century or century and a half, since the printing of books rapidly and in large numbers has been a slow process and is a comparatively recent achievement.

§ 4. *The Influence of Writing*

It has been seen that writing, like everything else, has developed through certain definite stages by evolution; slowly at first, then gradually faster until the introduction

of printing caused it to develop rapidly. It is significant that, just as some species have not passed beyond a certain stage (e.g., the Australian mud-fish), and others have been shunted on to special lines in development (e.g., the horse, which has been specialized for speed), so some races, like the Australians, have not passed beyond the crudest form of the pictorial stage, and one other at least (the Chinese) has side-tracked into an elaborate system of ideographs, from which no alphabet has ever been developed.

Probably, at first writing was used rather as an addition to pictorial records by those whose interest it was to prevent the great mass of the common people from gleaning too much knowledge concerning secret things. This secrecy doubtless tended in some measure to hinder the development of writing; but once such an advance in transmission had been invented it was bound to progress and spread, whatever the obstacles placed in its way.

Few people who are able to read and write ever pause to reflect upon what writing means to mankind. Not only does it make it possible for two individuals to communicate with one another when separated by hundreds of miles of sea and land, but it enables large numbers of men to share a common knowledge. In addition, it enables them to profit by the knowledge which has been accumulated by those who lived before them. One man can now accomplish in his short lifetime work a small part of which alone would have taken him all his life to do in days long gone by. As speech developed memory, so writing fixes old memories. Thus the art has made it possible for human thought to become more continuous and sustained—a thing which oral transmission could accomplish only to a limited extent.

By means of writing traditions can be preserved more fully and more exactly. The old traditions transmitted entirely by word of mouth were, as has been seen, liable

to become slowly altered and augmented; but by the agency of writing they began to be more fixed.¹ *Litera scripta manet*, says the Latin proverb—"The written word remains." Only mistakes or alterations intentionally made can change it. Thus exact thought can more easily be transferred. But, although the real beginning of intellectual life came with the art of writing, its full power and influence, owing to scarcity of manuscripts and secrecy, was not reached until the invention and spread of printing; it was then that intellectual life obtained its freedom, and it has since rapidly progressed.

§ 5. *The Character of Scriptures and their Supposed Inspiration*

All the more highly civilized nations have left behind them traditions which, having become sacred in the way already described, were handed down, at first by oral transmission, later as written records.

Some nations have adopted the sacred traditions of other peoples, and have incorporated them with such as they themselves possessed, while some have had traditions forced upon them by conquering nations. An important instance of this is exemplified by the Jews, who, after their long captivity in Babylon, adopted many of the sacred traditions of the Babylonians and wove them in with their own beliefs. Further influenced by those of the Persians, the traditions of the Jewish people form a considerable part of the Old Testament books of the Bible, and were later taken over by the Christians. But the beliefs which the Jews brought from Babylon had been earlier derived from a more ancient race, the Sumerians, so that there is here an instance of very ancient traditions handed down as "sacred" from one nation to another to form a scripture.

¹ It is probable, however, that this preservation by writing affected only the cream of tradition.

Traditions thus handed down did not remain unaltered. They have frequently undergone great changes; sometimes so much so that at first sight it is difficult to recognize them in their original form without careful investigation. The learned men of a people which adopted them had, by reason of their having charge of them, plenty of opportunity to alter and add to them. They changed foreign names of gods to those of their own deities and legendary heroes, and did their best to make these traditions fit in with their own national ideas.

Sacred scriptures may usually be divided into five groups:—

1. Traditions as to the gods; as in the stories of Greece and Rome.
2. Traditions as to origins; as of the creation of man.
3. Sacred codes of laws; as those presumed to have originated with Moses.
4. Tribal and national traditions; as of the origin of the Greeks.
5. Sayings of great men; as of the Chinese Confucius.

Examples of all these will be given when the scriptures of different peoples are examined more in detail.

There is one other matter concerning the various sacred scriptures that must be spoken of here, and that is *the belief in their inspiration*. “Inspiration”¹ means “the supernatural divine influence exerted upon sacred teachers and writers by the spirit of a god, by which divine authority was given to their writings.”

In every nation there has been a firm belief in this inspiration, or divine origin, of their scriptures; generally combined with a contempt for and disbelief in those of all other peoples. As the ages have gone on, the ideas so deeply embedded in the mind of primitive man reappear at a later and more culturally advanced period in elaborate

¹ Latin, *in*, in; *spiro*, I breathe.

codes of laws drawn up by learned men who claim to have obtained them from the god direct. The similarity which exists between the earliest words supposed to have been spoken by a god and the ideas of savages is very close and remarkable. It must be remembered that to primitive man, as to modern savages, the conception of spirits everywhere, and of their talking in dreams, was very real indeed; so that it is easy to see how man, face to face with nature, "mistook his wild and wandering thoughts for a revelation from heaven."

If inspiration came from the god, then the utterances inspired would endure through all ages, and be consequently fixed and unalterable; but from time to time those who had charge of sacred scriptures have not thought it incompatible with their "inspired" character to change them to suit fresh ideas and modern advances. This is taking place to-day. It occurred in the various books which form part of the Old Testament, the Jewish rabbis endeavouring to reconcile them with newer thought. Usually those who made such alterations claimed in their turn to be inspired, thus making it appear that the god changed his mind frequently—an idea which, however it may accord with human progress, is scarcely compatible with the attributes usually associated with a supreme divinity. This question of inspiration will occupy us more than once in the ensuing pages.

§ 6. *The Scriptures of Different Peoples*

Before passing on to examine the legends and teachings contained in the books of the Old Testament and the way in which they were compiled, it will be well to say something as to the sacred writings which the various other great nations of the world have regarded as inspired.

Mesopotamia.—The earliest inhabitants concerning whom anything is known in the fertile valleys round the

Tigris and Euphrates rivers were the Akkado-Sumerians, composed of two peoples—the Akkadians, who lived in the highlands, and the Sumerians, who dwelt in the plains. They were the forerunners of the great empires of Babylonia and Assyria. They possessed a code of laws and a collection of myths which have greatly influenced other ancient laws (especially those attributed to Moses), myths, and beliefs of later peoples. These Akkado-Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians all belonged to the Semitic race, of which the Jews formed a branch.

They used a system of writing which, from its wedge-shaped characters, is called *cuneiform*. They were great and powerful nations, carrying on a considerable commerce with neighbouring peoples, and keeping records and writing letters on tablets of baked clay, many of which have been found. In 1887 over three hundred of these tablets were discovered at Tel-el-Amarna, on the Nile. Specimens are to be seen in the British Museum. Most of them form the correspondence which passed between the Court of Babylonia and the Egyptian King Amunhetep IV (the great reformer Akhnaten) in the fourteenth century B.C., but some were copies of a great poem, the “Epic of Gilgamesh,” containing myths of the creation, the fall of man, and the flood.

The oldest known sacred writing of these nations was discovered at Susa in 1902. It is called the *Code of Hammurabi*, and is engraved upon a large stone, with a bas-relief of Hammurabi worshipping the Sun-god Shamash. This relief has given rise to a statement (repeated in many works) that the king is represented receiving his code from the deity. This is, from the substance of the text below it, erroneous. Hammurabi lived about 2250 B.C., and united the peoples of Chaldea in order to form the Babylonian Empire. For the guidance of his subjects he drew up a code of some three hundred laws dealing with slavery, marriage,

sorcery, trade, crime, etc.—a most comprehensive collection, reflecting a high state of culture (see Chapter IV).

These ancient sacred writings are mentioned on account of the close similarity they bear to the Jewish moral laws and myths, which were evidently founded upon them. The Hebrews had no writing before about 800 or 900 B.C.

Egypt.—The chief sacred writing of ancient Egypt was the *Book of the Dead*, which contained full directions as to the behaviour of the soul when it appeared before the great judge of the dead. One sentence—"I have made no man weep"—cannot be surpassed in any code of morals. Portions of this complicated ritual were engraved upon Egyptian sarcophagi before 2000 B.C.

Besides the *Book of the Dead* were the *Sayings of Akhnaten*, or Khu-en-aten, the great reformer king of Egypt, of whom something will be said later; and the *Instructions of Ptah-hotep*, one of the earliest known moral codes, dating from about 3550 B.C.

Persia.—The ancient religion of Persia is called "Zoroastrianism," from the name of its founder, Zoroaster, or, as spelt by the Greeks, Zoroaster. He died, according to the best authorities, in 583 B.C. This religion has been described as the "noblest and purest of the ancient faiths."¹ Its sacred books form what is known as the *Zend-Avesta*, which contains legends about the gods, moral and ceremonial laws, and spells against evil spirits and diseases. From it sprang the worship of the sun-god *Mithra*, a cult which was the great rival of Christianity in the early days of the latter.

China.—There are three national religions in the vast country of China—Buddhism (to be considered separately), Taoism, and Confucianism.

Taoism was founded by Lao-Tsze (meaning "the venerable teacher"), who lived between 500 and 600 B.C.

¹ E. Clodd, *The Childhood of Religions* (London; 1904), p. 279.

He was a great thinker, but the religion he founded has degenerated into a form of animism, becoming mixed up with the worship of spirits of mountains, rivers, etc., and it is regarded with contempt by the more intellectual Chinese. Lao-Tsze left behind him a number of *Sayings* which are venerated by Taoists.

Confucianism is founded on the teachings of the great Chinese law-giver and teacher, Kung-Foo-Tsze (meaning "the master Kung"), whose name is generally known in its Latin form of Confucius. He was born 551 B.C., and lived to the age of seventy-two. He taught learning, morals, devotion of soul, and reverence; in other words, he endeavoured to show men *how to live*. The sacred books of the Chinese are *The Five King* and the *Four Shoo* ("shoo" meaning "writings"), and contain the sayings of the Chinese wise men. They date from some centuries B.C., and deal with morals, sacred rites, poems, and history. Only one of the Five King was made by Confucius, and one of the Four Shoo deals with his sayings. Confucius was fortunate in that he was not deified after death; he is respected entirely as *a man*, and his teachings are venerated by all Chinese.

India.—The ancient religion of India is *Hinduism* or *Brahmanism*, which is professed by three-fourths of its enormous population; the remainder are Buddhists, Christians, Mohammedans, and Animists. It is very ancient, the oldest of its hymns having been composed over 4,200 years ago. The sacred books of Hinduism are :—

1. The four *Vedas*, containing hymns of praise, chants, sacrificial formulas, and incantations.
2. The *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*, which deal with magic and philosophy.
3. The *Sûtras*, containing sacrificial rules and meditations.
4. The *Purânas* and *Tantras*, upon which the popular beliefs are founded.

5. The *Rámáyana* and *Mahábhárata*, which are poems.

6. The *Institutes of Manu*, containing laws and a myth of creation.

Buddhism.—Buddhism, the religion of many peoples in China, Thibet, Burma, and India, was founded by Buddha, who is said to have been born in 628 B.C. Its sacred book is the *Tripitaka*, or “three baskets,” containing certain rules of discipline, sayings of Buddha, philosophy, and doctrine. Buddha was deified, and his cult became corrupt.

Mohammedanism, or *Islám*, was founded by Mohammed, who was born at Mecca in 571 A.D. It is the religion of the Arabs, Turks, and many people in India. Its sacred book is the *Kóran*, or *Al Kóran*, Arabic words meaning “The Reading,” or “The Book,” just as our word “Bible” is derived from the Greek *Hó Biblos*, “The Book.”

These are the chief sacred books of the world, in the inspiration of which the countless thousands who profess the religions which they represent believe firmly. Extracts from them will be given in Chapter IX, and it will be seen that many of their myths and teachings bear a strong resemblance to each other and to those of the Bible.

CHAPTER V

THE MAKING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

§ 1. *The Bible as a Sacred Book*

THE Bible consists of two parts, the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. The Old Testament is a collection of the sacred books and poems of the Jews, comprising their laws, myths, legends, history, and poetry. The New Testament embodies the traditions and legends which have accumulated round the person of Jesus Christ, together with what have been believed to be his teachings and those of the men who taught in his name.

For some hundreds of years the Bible has been looked upon by Christians as a sacred book, written by men inspired by God (the Yahweh, or Jehovah, of the Jews). For long it was kept strictly secret by the priests of the Christian Church, who read only such portions of it to the people as they considered essential, and who forbade those outside the priesthood to read it for themselves or even to possess a copy, thus following a method which, as pointed out in Chapter IV, is not uncommon among those who assume the custody of sacred writings. This attitude of the priesthood has been well portrayed in Borrow's classical book, *The Bible in Spain*. The fact that the Bible at that time was translated only into Latin and Greek added to the mystery with which it was intentionally surrounded; and until it was rendered into the vernacular of Dutch, English, French, and German Christians it remained a sealed book to the great mass of the people.

For many years the Bible was firmly believed to be "inspired," and the whole Christian world had no idea

that the stories it contained concerning the creation of the world and of man, the fall of our supposed "first parents" and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and the destruction wrought by an universal deluge were not absolute facts. At the end of the fifteenth century C.E., however, dawning science brought proofs that the teachings of the Bible were at variance with the facts that were beginning to be ascertained about nature. Between 1473 and 1543 Copernicus, the astronomer, discovered that the earth was not the centre of the universe, in direct contradiction to the Ptolemaic geocentral doctrine. This discovery was confirmed by Kepler in 1609 to 1618, and by Galileo in 1610. The Christian Church, represented by its powerful priesthood, refused to admit the truth of the new doctrine, and persecuted the discoverers; indeed, the conception of the earth moving round the sun was met with scorn and derision. The pitiful story of Galileo is too well known to be related here. In the eighteenth century scientific knowledge steadily increased, and by the early nineteenth century the creation and flood stories were disproved by the incontestable discoveries of geology. The culminating discovery, which came with Darwin and Huxley, is that known as the doctrine of Evolution, whereby the facts discussed in Chapter I were established, and it was proved that man was akin to all other animals in the unbroken order of nature.

During the years whence we date the gradual growth of science and its discoveries (and they are scarcely more than four hundred—a tiny item compared with the ages man has existed), intellectual men gradually became convinced that the statements in the Bible were disproved by the known facts of nature, and that the only way in which the truth could be ascertained was by reasoning it out from the discoveries of Science, which are based upon careful observation and comparison. Thus was applied slowly, but steadily, the method called *Rationalism*, which

may be defined as "the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience and independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority."

This led to an extension of that method to the criticism of such matters as the origin of sacred writings. By the study of primitive races and their beliefs, the facts set out in Chapters II to IV began to be understood, and it was found that much of the teaching in all scriptures, including the Bible, embodied the crude ideas, myths, and traditions of peoples who had not reached beyond guessing and using their imaginations. In the case of the Bible, learned men, who realized that the principles which were applicable to other scriptures could be equally directed to the Christian sacred books, began to investigate its origin and to ascertain how it grew into the collection of writings that it finally became. All this was not accomplished without strenuous and bitter opposition, during which the truth has slowly gained ground, and those interested in retarding it have been obliged gradually to retire, like a beaten army, from one position to another. It will now be seen what this investigation has accomplished.

§ 2. *The Early History of the Jews*

In order to understand how the Old Testament grew into its present shape, it is necessary to know whence the Jews came and the way in which they developed as a nation.

It has been seen that the Akkado-Sumerians inhabited the country round the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and that they were later followed by the Babylonians and Assyrians. This country was earlier called Chaldæa, and the peoples inhabiting it had reached to a fair degree of civilization. They belonged to the race of Semites, tribes living on the borders of Chaldæa. This name "Semites" was supposed to have been derived from Noah's son Shem,

but it is probably a modified fragment of the ethnic name Ishmael.¹

About 2,600 years before the Jews settled in the land of Canaan, or Palestine (a name which is a corruption of that of the Philistines), a powerful king, Sargon I, reigned in Chaldaea. His mother was supposed to have placed him, when a babe, in a basket of reeds made watertight by bitumen, and sent him floating down the Euphrates. He was rescued by a gardener named Akki, and served in the latter's garden until the goddess Ishtar fell in love with him and set him to rule over Chaldaea. This very ancient myth is important as indicating the source of the Hebrew story of Moses and Pharaoh's daughter.

The early Semites of Babylonia were controlled by a powerful priesthood, who represented the gods and interceded with them for the rest of the people. Everything they said was believed to be "inspired." They were fortune-tellers and magicians, and directed the actions of the kings by consulting oracles. They administered justice, and were, indeed, the only learned class. Among a highly superstitious people, whose life was one long terror of danger from spirits and demons, they were themselves superstitious. Their deities were numerous—they were, indeed, Animists—and every misfortune was attributed to the anger of the gods, who had to be placated by sacrifices and rich offerings. One of their most important deities was the Earth-god Bel.

They possessed myths of creation and of an universal deluge (see Chapters IV and VI), a code of laws, and tribal traditions. Probably many of the latter were handed down in the stories of the Patriarchs, since Abraham's brother Haran (the father of Lot) "died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldees" (*Gen.* xi, 28), and Abraham went forth with Terah and the rest of the family "from Ur of

¹ *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 4449.

the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan" (*Gen.* xi, 31). It may be mentioned here that there are grave doubts as to whether Abraham and the other patriarchs were historical personages, and it is probable that they were old tribal deities of Palestine.

The division of the Semitic tribes known as the Jews wandered from Chaldæa as nomads, possessing flocks and herds, and moving about in search of fresh pastures, living the life of the modern Bedouin. This nomadic life set new legends and traditions forming, which, as it lasted many years, had ample time to grow. These probably formed the basis for the description of the "Patriarchal Age" in *Genesis*.

The racial affinities between the Jews and the Babylonians explain why the basis of their worship and their traditions was Babylonian. These early Jews, therefore, were Animists, and had many gods, local and household deities. The story of how Rachel stole the household gods when she fled with Jacob from Laban (*Gen.* xxxi, 34) indicates this. Some of the Jewish gods were tribal deities. In considering the evolution of the faith of a people, it must be borne in mind that tribal ethic moulds tribal religion, and later follows it or is remoulded by it. The early Hebrews did not worship "one god the creator of heaven and earth," although possibly they had heard of such a deity. Coming originally from Chaldæa, they must have known of Bel, who is called Marduk, or Merodach, in the Babylonian story of the creation. But their conception of such a god developed very slowly. Hebrew scholars have concluded that Yahweh, or Jehovah, was originally simply one of their many local gods. He was probably a hill-god, residing in some mountain peak, one of the gods of nature-worship, who first came to be the chief and later the only god because he was a *fighting deity*.¹

¹ The story of Yahweh will be considered in Chapter VI.

Just as with other primitive races, these early Jewish wanderers had no special priests, the patriarch himself conducting the worship and offerings. Some of the tribes settled in different parts of Canaan. One such settlement was in the region called Musri, near Mount Horeb, in Arabia. These people were called Musrites, and it has been suggested that the name Moses means simply a Musrite. It is noteworthy that in *Exodus* xx the ten commandments are given to Moses in Sinai, and in *Deuteronomy* v in Horeb. It has recently been stated by Dr. Sayce that the Israelites were never anywhere near to Mount Sinai, and these two evidences tend to strengthen the supposition that Moses and Musrite are synonymous. There are, indeed, grave doubts as to the historicity of Moses. In the account given of him in the Old Testament, as in other matters, the object of the narrators is "not to relate what actually occurred, but to shape traditions of the past for the good of the present."¹

It is probable that the "forty years in the wilderness" expresses these wanderings of the early Jewish tribes; and that the story of the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus was a legend that grew up later to account for the origin of the special tribe called Israel. There is no historical foundation for the story of the Exodus, and no mention is made of it in the Egyptian records. Palestine was under Egyptian rule. That some Jews were captive slaves in Egypt is possible, however, for the Egyptians needed slaves for the building of their great temples and pyramids, and made raids to obtain them. There is evidence that some Jews in their wanderings reached the Nile Delta. The number forty frequently occurs in the Bible; in the literature of the East it stands simply for an uncertain period. Until man reached accuracy in his ideas of number (which was not

¹ Guthe, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*.

until very late in his development), the length of time he assigned to his traditions and history was, as with all primitive races, very vague.

The wandering Jewish tribes do not appear to have reached a state of complete settlement in Canaan for many years, save here and there (as at Musri, for example), and then not very securely. The country was occupied mainly by the Phœnicians, and did not become Jewish until much later. Until the time of David the Jews were represented by groups of tribes, much as England was divided up into small provinces until Alfred the Great prepared the way for Cnut the Dane to unite them. David was the leader who, by successful wars, knit these tribes together until they became more firmly established, so that in the reign of Solomon they began to feel themselves a people of some importance. It is from this time, with its dawning sense of nationality and patriotism, that the real history of "the Jews" begins. Such a union of the tribes cannot have become solid all at once, and it is probable that it took at least one hundred years before they could settle and break down completely the resistance of the older inhabitants of the country.

Primitive ideas of time in years are, as has been said, very vague. A study of those books of the Old Testament which deal especially with history shows this plainly, and it has to be assisted and corrected by comparison with the records of peoples who had reached to a more advanced stage of culture. In 1 *Samuel* xiii, 1, it is stated that "Saul was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel." This is the statement in the Hebrew document, but in the Revised Version of the English Bible the word "thirty" has been substituted for "one," and a note to that effect placed in the margin. Further, David (1 *Kings* ii, 2) and Solomon (1 *Kings* xi, 42) are both said to have reigned "forty years"—that is to say, a vague period

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which cannot be taken in the sense in which the term is understood to-day.

After Solomon the kingdom was split into two—Israel in the north and Judah in the south, with Samaria and Jerusalem as their respective chief cities. In the statements in the two books of *Kings* as to the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah there is a discrepancy of about nineteen years. The number of years between the accession of Solomon and the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians was about three hundred—a period which includes the founding of the Temple at Jerusalem in Solomon's reign and the end of the kingdom of Israel in that of Hezekiah, king of Judah. With the fall of the northern kingdom the real history of Samaria as a city begins. It was then that the Assyrian monarch, after carrying off the people of Israel, repeopled it with men from Hamath, Cuthab, Arva, and Sepharvaim. This is important for a due appreciation of Samaria in later history. About one hundred and thirty-four years more passed from the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.) to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar¹ (586 B.C.). It was during this period that the supposed finding of a sacred book (*Deuteronomy*) in the Temple took place in the reign of Josiah—an important event as affecting the making of the Old Testament. Josiah, after the vigorous attempt which he made to enforce the religious reforms based upon this "find," was slain soon after at the Battle of Meggido, when fighting against the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho.

Nebuchadrezzar carried the better classes of the Jews to Babylon, where they remained in exile for about fifty years, until the Babylonian Empire succumbed to the Persians under Cyrus. These fifty years are known as "The Exile," or "The Captivity." Cyrus sent Nehemiah,

¹ Nabu-kudur-uzur; wrongly called "Nebuchadnezzar" in the book of *Daniel*.

with the remnant of the captives, to Jerusalem, with a mandate to rebuild the Temple. Thus the Temple was refounded exactly fifty years after its destruction. The lower classes of the Jews had been left by Nebuchadrezzar in their own country, where they mingled with the surrounding inhabitants and lapsed into the worship of other local gods.

The number of years between the founding of Solomon's Temple and the fall of Jerusalem was about four hundred and thirty. This represents the period during which the Jews were an important nation fit to be considered by the great civilized nations around them. But the time was a stormy one for them, placed as they were in the position of a "buffer state" between the great contending empires of Babylon and Egypt.

The fall of Jerusalem naturally involved the destruction of the Jewish kingdom. As a result of this and of the mission of Nehemiah, the rule which replaced it was a priestly one. The High Priest of the newly-built Temple of Jerusalem became the head of the nation and Jerusalem a "holy city." It was not the only one, for holy cities were common in the East. Thus Tyre was the holy city of the god Baal, and Askalon, Byblus, and Sidon were holy cities in the Greek and Roman periods. Many of them have been forgotten, but so much is known about Jerusalem because of the preservation of the sacred writings concerning it. There are such cities at the present day. Mecca is the holy city of the Mohammedans, Benares of the Hindoos, and Rome that of Roman Catholicism; while in Africa Timbuctu, Benin, and other places, hold similar positions in the estimation of the natives.

For over a hundred years after Cyrus the Jews seem to have experienced a period of peace and tranquillity, during which the Temple was built and the foundation laid of the priestly form of the Jewish religion—i.e., the exclusive worship of Yahweh as a jealous god who would

brook no other form of worship. The neighbouring great civilizations no longer considered that there was the same danger from a people ruled by priests in place of kings, and therefore did not trouble them much, although the Jews were probably implicated to some extent in the frequent wars that went on around them.

An important event occurred when Cambyses, the successor of Cyrus, marched through Palestine to conquer Egypt (527 B.C.). This conquest opened Egypt to the Jews, and one consequence was that they formed a colony at Elephantine, from which a close correspondence was kept up with Jerusalem, mention of which will be made later. In 405 B.C. the Persians were driven out, and until 352 B.C. Egypt was in the ascendant, and the Jews again became a buffer state. Practically nothing is known of the history of Jerusalem during these wars, but the Jews were elaborating their sacred literature.

In 334 B.C. the Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great at the Battle of the Granicus, which led to the capture of Tyre and Gaza and the Greek occupation of Egypt. With the Battle of Arbela (331 B.C.) the Persian Empire came to an end and Greek influence became supreme. This meant a great change in the Eastern world, for Greek ideas were introduced. The Jews of the Diaspora (the settlements outside Palestine) now largely spoke Greek, and a Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the *Septuagint*, was begun, to be finished in the second century B.C. Between the Battle of Arbela and 190 B.C. the Jews were sometimes under the rule of the Greek kings (the Ptolemies) of Egypt, sometimes under those of Syria. The latter rule was completely broken at the Battle of Magnesia (190 B.C.), when Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne. His name "Epiphanes" means "the Brilliant," but he bore another and less complimentary nickname, that of "Epimanes," or "the Madman," on account of his extraordinary freaks. His rule was weak, for Rome now began to influence

Egypt, and there were frequent revolts everywhere. One of these rebellions was that of the Maccabeans, to be spoken of later. In 63 B.C. Pompey conquered Judæa, and the Jews came under the vast domination of the Romans.

§ 3. *How the Old Testament was Built Up*

A position has now been reached from which an explanation can be given of how the Old Testament began to assume the form in which it now appears in the original and in the various translations of the Bible.

The books given in the list at the beginning of the Old Testament number thirty-nine. The Hebrew Bible, however, contained twenty-two (corresponding with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet), and later twenty-four. They were divided into the following three sections:—

1. THE LAW: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*.

2. THE PROPHETS: *Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah*, and the twelve “minor prophets.” [In our Bible *Samuel* and *Kings* are each divided into two parts, and “the twelve” are separated.

3. THE HAGIOGRAPHIA, or “scriptures”¹: *Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra* (of which *Nehemiah* forms part), and *Chronicles*. In our Bible *Chronicles* is divided into two parts, and *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* are separated.

The arrangement of the books in our Bible is very confusing. They are mixed up in such a manner as to misrepresent their meaning. *The Prophets*, for example, have been sorted out according to their length rather than their importance and the order in which they were

¹ Greek, *hagios*, sacred; *grapho*, I write.

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written. The confusion has been further increased by cutting the books up into chapters, whereby they are often so divided as to obscure their meaning.

The manner in which the Hebrew Bible has reached its present form has been traced bit by bit by the labours of learned men. It is a very interesting piece of history, and well illustrates the way in which sacred books, believed to be "inspired," are compiled. An endeavour will be made to show this as clearly and briefly as possible.

All known copies of the Hebrew Bible, both printed and in manuscript, contain certain peculiarities in lettering to understand which requires a knowledge of Hebrew. These peculiarities show that they are all derived from some one book which no longer exists. This vanished book was probably considered to be so sacred that the scribes dared not alter it.

Although the oldest known Hebrew manuscript is not older than the tenth century C.E., and, from its character, the peculiarities just mentioned are probably not older than the sixth century C.E., there are clues to earlier manuscripts. At the end of the fourth century C.E. St. Jerome translated the Hebrew into Latin, his translation being known as the *Vulgate*. It indicates that he worked from a manuscript or manuscripts that differed from those at present known. Further, before Jerome's time, the Hebrew Bible had been rendered into Greek, and these Greek versions are even more unlike the oldest known Hebrew manuscript than is the Latin translation. This shows that in earlier times the writers who were compiling the sacred books made additions or alterations as they thought fit, and that the scribes did not always reverence the original writings as they did later. Hence it cannot be said that the lost book was exactly like the Old Testament books as we now have them. The Hebrews did not possess the art of writing before 800 or 900 B.C., and the tradition among the Jews at the beginning of the

Christian Era was that the original manuscripts were destroyed with Solomon's Temple, and that Ezra made a fresh set from such copies as could be found, adding to them his own book and that of *Nehemiah*.

A step further can now be taken by examining the most important of the books forming the Old Testament. These are the five so-called "Books of Moses," designated by the Jews as the *Torah*, or law, and by us the *Pentateuch*.¹ They show numerous contradictions. They contain many different stories relating to the same things, but disagreeing with one another. For example, in *Genesis* xx there is a tale told of Abraham which in xxvi is told of Isaac; and, as will be seen in Chapter VI, *Genesis* contains two different and contradictory accounts of the Creation and two discrepant versions of the Flood.

Again, besides ancient legends, the Pentateuch contains many laws and rules dealing with morals and worship. These are not set down in any precise order, and contradict one another in several particulars. In *Exodus* xxi, 2-11, *Deuteronomy* xv, 12-18, and *Leviticus* xxv, 39-55, for instance, are three laws concerning slavery, all of which are contradictory.

The results of an examination of the Pentateuch show clearly that the five books were compiled from three distinct documents or codes. The first of these, believed to be the oldest, is called the *Jahvist-Elohists*, because of the way in which the names of the god are used. There are several ways of naming the god in the Old Testament: *El-Shaddai* ("The Mighty One," a title given to one of the oldest Semitic deities), *Elohim* (which means "gods," being the plural of *El*), *Adonai* ("Lord," or "Master"), and *Yahweh* (or "Jehovah"), the name given to the god much later. The manner in which these names are translated indicates which title is used. *El Shaddai* (as in *Gen.* xvii, 1) is rendered "God Almighty," *Elohim*

¹ Greek, *Penta*, five; *teuchos*, book.

"God," Adonai "lord," and Yahweh always as "LORD." In *Genesis* i and ii, 1-3, "Elohim" occurs thirty-five times and "Yahweh" not at all, while in *Genesis* xxiv "Yahweh" appears nineteen times and "Elohim" not once. As these different names were used at different periods, they give clues to the time at which the documents were written. The Jahvist-Elohist document was clearly itself a compilation from two different sources.

The second oldest is called the *Deuteronomist*, because it is contained chiefly in the book of *Deuteronomy*. It belongs to about 621 B.C., the time of the "finding" of the book of the law in the Temple in the reign of Josiah.

The third oldest is called the *Priestly Code*, as it deals mostly with ceremony and ritual. It dates from soon after the Exile, and was derived from the new code set up by Ezra. It was read in Jerusalem in 444 B.C., and covers eighty-five chapters—eleven in *Genesis*, nineteen in *Exodus*, all *Leviticus*, twenty-eight in *Numbers*, and parts of *Joshua*. It pays much attention to families and pedigrees, and gives full details regarding regulations as to sacrifices and priestly vestments and offices. It is to the Priestly Code that are owing the descriptions of the Tabernacle in the wilderness; and the elaborate system of worship and priesthood there described did not exist in early Israel.

The three sources are usually denoted by scholars as J E., D., and P., for short, and these letters will be used here whenever there is occasion to refer to them. They were probably once three separate documents, which were pieced together in constructing the Hebrew Bible. The Priestly Code is the largest and most important, and forms the framework into which the others were fitted.

Until comparatively recently the Pentateuch was believed to have been written by Moses, and this belief is still held by those who are ignorant of the true facts. It was, indeed, written much later. There are many reasons why Moses could not have been the author, even

putting aside the fact that there are serious doubts as to his historicity. The following are the three principal reasons:—

1. No man could describe his own death and burial as that of Moses is told in *Deuteronomy* xxiv, 5 and 6.

2. "Before there reigned a king over Israel" is mentioned, whereas the Jews had no kings until long after the period described.

3. "There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (*Deut.* xxxiv, 10) can only be the opinion of some one writing long after his death.

An examination of the Old Testament books shows that they can all be classified under the three sources J E., D., and P. There are contradictions not only in the Pentateuch, but in other books as well. In *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings* there is one history given ranging from Joshua to the Exile, while in *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah* there is another from the death of Saul to the mission of Nehemiah to rebuild the Temple. These two histories disagree in many points. The story in *Kings* is carried down to the Babylonian King Evil-Merodach ("Avil-Marduk"), while *Nehemiah* ends with "Darius the Persian" (*Darius* III). Further, in the books of *Kings* special importance is given to the finding of the "laws of Moses" in the reign of Josiah, while *Nehemiah* is concerned rather with the laws published by Ezra after the Exile. The differences found in the two histories are due to the fact that the writers were describing events from two points of view—the one from the Deuteronomist, the other from the Priestly side. These two elements, D. and P., are recognizable by their special peculiarities.

Examination shows that the Pentateuch is made up of D. and P. elements, mixed with other (J E.) material which, whether handed down by oral or written transmission, was considered sufficiently sacred not to be disregarded. It means simply that, as the Jews progressed in culture and in religious ideas after the Priestly Code

had been adopted, the scribes combined it with earlier writings, which, for reasons already explained in Chapter IV, had come to be regarded as sacred and "inspired." This took time, and the Pentateuch did not reach its present form until the period of Alexander the Great.

To recapitulate a little. The Jews were no more exempt from the process of Evolution than any other people. From primitive folk wandering as nomads, they passed through a stage of Animism, worshipping a number of gods and accumulating a stock of myths common to the Semitic races, from which gradually came into prominence a chief deity who was a fighting god. The traditions of this period are preserved in the J E. element of their sacred writings. After long struggles and wanderings, from which they emerged a nation, a priesthood developed which gave them a code of religious and moral laws—the Deuteronomists. The prophets *Amos*, *Hosea*, *Micah*, and *Isaiah* (except the first thirty-nine chapters, which are considered to have been written later) contain many of the original religious ideas of the Israelites, which cannot be distinguished from those of other Semitic nations. The J E. element in the Pentateuch is similar to these ideas, and is probably near to these four prophets in time. The Deuteronomic code of laws received by this primitive nation from a priesthood which had slowly gained in power was the book "discovered" in the temple by Hilkiyah, the High Priest in the reign of Josiah. Hilkiyah was anxious, for priestly and patriotic reasons, to establish the exclusive worship of one god. The reform resulted in a religious revolution, and Josiah broke up the old worship of local gods, destroying their sanctuaries and "high places," and allowed no worship of Yahweh save in Jerusalem. This meant increased revenues and greater power for the priests of that holy city. As with all great changes, the population, clinging to ancient customs and worship,

resisted strongly; and Josiah, actively supported by the priesthood, succeeded only after much bloodshed and persecution.

This important change was soon followed by other serious troubles. Josiah was killed in battle, and the Jews were conquered and carried away into captivity in Babylon. This exile is the great dividing line in their history. These troubles were really caused, as has been mentioned, by the position of Judah as a buffer state between Babylonia and Egypt; but the priests seized upon them as an opportunity for increasing their own importance. They attributed them to the anger of Yahweh at the opposition of the population to the new form of worship. It is from this period that the book of *Jeremiah*, which is wholly Deuteronomic, was derived.

The better and more intellectual classes of the Jews went into exile as still a primitive nation. They remained in captivity for half-a-century, during which they assimilated Babylonian culture, with all its traditions, rites, and ceremonies. Hence, when Nehemiah, entrusted with the Persian King's command to rebuild the Temple, went to Jerusalem, those who returned with him (for some settled in Babylon) did so as a people more advanced in civilization and with new ideas, so that a fresh set of laws and fresh traditions were published in the Priestly Code.

The following table may serve to show more clearly the composition of the Pentateuch.¹ Probably the oldest fragment of Old Testament literature is the Song of Deborah and Barak (*Judges* v), which is eleventh century B.C. The next oldest are the "Sword Song" (*Gen.* iv), the "Blessing of Jacob" (*Gen.* xlix), the "Red Sea Triumph Song" (*Exod.* xv), the "Song of Moses" (*Deut.* xxxii), and the "Blessing of Moses" (*Deut.* xxx),

¹ A detailed list of the passages which belong to the Priestly Code is to be found in Gould's *The Building of the Bible* (now out of print).

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all of which are ninth to eighth century B.C. Some or all of these must have been handed down by oral transmission, since the Jews had no writing before 900 or 800 B.C. :—

Genesis.....J E., D., P.
Exodus.....J E. chiefly ; with some P.
Leviticus and Numbers.....P. chiefly.
Deuteronomy.....D., with some J E.

§ 4. *The Prophets*

The books which form “The Prophets” in the Hebrew Bible are mostly historical or poetic. Their sources and characters will be best shown in tabular form :—

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Joshua</i>	J E., D., P., changes and additions down to the Greek Period. Made up of exceedingly miscellaneous fragments.	Attributes to one man (Joshua), one generation, and one campaign what was really a long series of events lasting over a hundred years. Owing to its made-up nature, contains discrepancies, as in Crossing of Jordan (iii, 7, and iv, 11) and the setting up of the twelve stones (iv, 9 and 11). See also Chapter VI.
<i>Judges</i>	D., with traces of J E. (story of Micah and the Danites, xvii and xviii; the Levite, xix; and the denunciation of Benjamin, xx-xxi).	A collection of legends of national champions and deliverers, arranged with the design of illustrating the teachings of Hosea and Jeremiah. <i>Judges</i> v, the Song of Deborah and Barak, is probably the most ancient part of the Bible.

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Samuel</i>	Both books J E., except 2 <i>Sam.</i> vii. They have been altered, so that the order of the story is upset.	Samuel was a "seer," akin to the medicine-man or witch-doctor of lower races. His reputation was probably local, as he was unknown to Saul until the latter heard of him through his servant (1 <i>Sam.</i> ix, 5-10). The stories of his childhood, the song about the Amalekites, etc., were added late. Note contradictions, as the choosing of Saul as king: 1 <i>Sam.</i> xii states that the people desire a king, and ix-x, 16, that the god gives them one of his own accord.
<i>Kings</i>	Shows influence of D. Age in present form is late, probably post-Exilic, as it brings history down to time of Evil-Merodach.	Historic, probably partly made up from records left by kings, which supplied some foundation of fact. Contains much folk-lore and hero-legend, especially as regards Solomon (see Chapter VI, § 10). The Elijah legend was manifestly drawn from an old sun-myth.
<i>Jeremiah</i>	D. M a y have been written not long before the collapse of the kingdom of Judah. Added to by later writers anxious to increase the sayings of Jeremiah.	The Prophets were a development of the "seers," and some of them were probably of the same type as the modern dervishes, who work themselves into a condition of excitement during which they prophesy. In Hebrew the same word is used for "raving" and "prophesying." The highest order of prophets was, however, of a different nature, and embraced thinkers and poets. Jeremiah preached the reforms of Josiah, and, like most reformers, was bitterly hated and in danger of his life for so doing.

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Ezekiel</i>	P.	Ezekiel preached to the exiles by the River Chebar, and his prophecies were designed to save his fellow captives from despair; hence they either deal with the future of the Jews or threaten other nations. His winged creatures were suggested by the Babylonian sculptures.
<i>Isaiah</i>	D. xxiv-xxvi are P., added after the Exile (about the fifth century B.C.), and are the work of an unknown prophet.	A collection of prophecies of various ages; xxxiv-xxxix contain extracts from the books of <i>Kings</i> and other sources.
The Twelve Minor Prophets	Hosea, Amos, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah are D. Joel, Obadiah, Micah, and Haggai are post-exilic. Jonah, Zechariah, and Malachi date from the Greek period.	Of these Hosea, pleading for a higher morality and cleaner methods of worship, is the greatest. Amos (who was a contemporary of Hosea) passionately decries the polytheistic nations who refused to worship Yahweh, and presents him in a different light from that of the other prophets, making him a god who hates festivals and refuses sacrifices and hymns of praise (v, 21-24). These belong to the eighth century B.C., and Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk to the seventh century B.C. Of <i>Zechariah</i> , ix-xi and xiii, 7-9, may have been written before the Exile; xii-xiv (excepting xiii, 7-9) probably belong to the fifth century B.C. Jonah will be discussed in Chapter VI.

In the Pentateuch and the Prophets are many items of myth and folklore, some of which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Before leaving them, however, a few words must be devoted to the way in which the Jews wrote history. In *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Judges*, and *Samuel* what is supposed to be history is so interwoven with tradition and folk-lore that it is well nigh impossible to distinguish the true from the false. Of course, the Jews are not alone in this; English history has its myths of King Arthur and King Lud, and even about actual kings, such as Alfred and Cnut. In the book of *Kings* Jewish history is a little more definite, probably because, from Solomon, their rulers began to cause records to be made concerning their acts; but in nearly all the books the chronology is unreliable, and must be checked by comparison with that of neighbouring nations. The priests not only adapted a modified history to impress the reader or to glorify a king, the nation, or Yahweh, but they were capable even of writing false history, as in the books of *Esther* and *Daniel*.

Another point requiring mention is the long pedigrees found in the Old Testament. Thus the first nine chapters of *Chronicles* are taken up with genealogies, and there are many in *Genesis* and other books, from the Priestly Code. This love of pedigrees is characteristic of all peoples who are just emerging from their primitive phase. They delight in the thought that they and their great men are descended from heroes and deities. The Greeks traced themselves to Hellen, the Romans to Romulus. The Egyptian pharaohs believed themselves descended from a god, the French kings from St. Louis; and our own royal family traces back to Cerdic. This love of pedigree is very persistent, and if the grandson of a labourer in modern times is lucky enough to obtain a title he can procure for money one that will prove him to be descended from one of the Conqueror's Norman knights. Considering the difficulty even now of tracing back a family for any

length of time, the obstacles must have been insuperable when there were no written records and only a vague oral transmission to depend upon. The greater part of these Old Testament pedigrees must, therefore, be untrue. Perhaps the best explanation of these genealogies is that they refer not to individuals, but to families, clans, and tribes. It is, for example, unquestionable that the names of Jacob's sons are merely clan names. This explanation is, moreover, the only one which can account for the extraordinary long lives recorded of the "patriarchs." It is certain from medical science and the evidence of anthropology that the duration of human life has been much the same at all periods of the human race. Men's lives are a little longer now because, thanks to medical research, we know better how to preserve them; but this is a very late development indeed. In *Genesis*, however, we find stories of men living nine hundred years, and only one of the patriarchs became a father before he was seventy. The rational explanation is that their supposed ages refer to the period for which a tribe existed, and not to individual men.

§ 5. *The Hagiographa*

The "Hagiographa," or "Scriptures," is a collection of eleven remarkable books comprising history, historical romance, fiction, philosophy, the sayings of wise men, and poetry. The following table shows their source or age and character:—

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Chronicles</i>	P. <i>Chronicles</i> , <i>Ezra</i> , and <i>Nehemiah</i> were compiled about 300 B.C. by a Priestly editor who carried history to rebuilding of Temple and introduction of Priestly Code. He used memoirs left by <i>Ezra</i> and <i>Nehemiah</i> .	History from the Priestly point of view, and so exaggerates greatness of David and Solomon and suppresses anything to their discredit. Hence often contradicts <i>Kings</i> , and probably built up from other sources, some of which are mentioned, as: Book of Kings of Israel and Judah (2 <i>C.</i> xviii, 16), History of Jehu (2 <i>C.</i> xx, 34), Commentary, or "Midrash," of Iddo (2 <i>C.</i> xiii, 22), and of Book of Kings (2 <i>C.</i> xxv, 27), Shemaiah, and Iddo (2 <i>C.</i> xii, 15).
<i>Ezra and Nehemiah</i>	P. (See above.) Parts of <i>Ezra</i> (iv, 8-23; v, 1-vi, 18; vii, 12-26) are in Aramaic (the official language of the Persian Court).	History from Priestly point of view. Describes introduction of Priestly Code of laws by <i>Ezra</i> . <i>Ezra</i> , <i>Nehemiah</i> , and <i>Chronicles</i> are designed rather to edify the reader than to impart exact historical truth.
<i>Daniel</i>	Greek Period; about 164 B.C. In ii, 4-end of vii Aramaic is used.	Historical romance, showing how the priests falsified history. Probably written to stimulate Maccabæan rebellion (see Chapter VI, § 11). i, 1-21, disagrees with 2 <i>Kings</i> xxiii-xxiv. Shows ignorance of real history of fall of Babylonian Empire and the Persian succession. Contains many Macedonian words unknown at the time at which it was supposed to be written. (See Chapter VI, § 11.)

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Esther</i>	P., third century B.C.	Historical romance, with no foundation in history, but based on Babylonian myth. Probably written to explain the Jewish Feast of <i>Purim</i> . (See Chapter VI, § 12.)
<i>Ruth</i>	Post-exilic ; fifth century B.C.	Popular fiction. A pretty story adapted to Jewish ideas of history, and to show that David was descended from Ruth, a Moabite woman.
<i>Proverbs</i>	Oldest part belongs to Persian Period. Present form dates from Greek Period.	Attributed to Solomon and other sages, but simply a collection of sayings of wise men loosely strung together to form a book. (See Chapter VI, § 10.)
<i>Job</i>	Post - exilic, probably sixth century B.C., but has many P. characters. By an unknown author, who took an old folk - tale for his basis.	One of the great poems of the world and the greatest work of Hebrew literature preserved. Suggests a new stage in Jewish thought, when man dared to question the acts of God. Concludes at xlii, 6. There are several interpolations, as the "wisdom" chapter (xxviii), most of xxvii, and the speeches of Elihu (xxxii-xxxvii).
<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	Belongs to latest form of Jewish literature (third century B.C.).	Philosophy. Attributed to Solomon under name of "Koheleth," or "The Preacher." Teaching very different from the usual Jewish ideas, and has been toned down by alterations and additions, as the last chapter, vii, 12-14. (See also Chapter VI, § 10.)

BOOK.	SOURCE OR AGE.	REMARKS.
<i>Psalms</i>	Belongs to latest of the Old Testament books. Some psalms are of the Greek period.	Poetry. A collection of 150 psalms, by different authors, used as hymns in the Temple services. Attributed to David, Solomon, Asaph, Ethan the Ezrazite, Moses, and the sons of Korah. Some psalms belong to the time of the Maccabæans. It was not until late in Jewish history that David was supposed to have left any collection of religious poetry behind him, although none can be attributed to him. The Babylonians possessed many penitential psalms which were far older than any in the Hebrew Bible. As the Jews were largely under Babylonian influence, they probably imitated these psalms.
<i>Lamentations</i>	Sixth century B.C. ; probably written near the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).	A collection of five poems said to be by Jeremiah, but really by different authors and therefore varying in character and merit. The second and fourth are the finest, and were probably written at a time near the fall which they describe.
<i>Song of Songs</i>	Persian Period; contains traces of Aramaic.	A love poem and not religious. Probably songs sung by the people at weddings. Attributed to Solomon because it contains his name. Not admitted as "sacred" until the priests suggested it referred to the spiritual love of Yahweh for Israel—an idea varied later by Christian commentators as representing Christ's love for his Church.

§ 6. *The Apocrypha*

The books which have been dealt with in the foregoing pages belong to the *Canon*¹—that is to say, they are the books recognized as “the inspired rule of faith and practice.”

There are, however, other writings which are not included in the Canon. There are fourteen books which were published too late to be included in the canonical Hebrew Scriptures, but which are accepted as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church, although generally rejected by the Protestant Churches. These fourteen books are as follows:—

1 and 2 *Esdras* (1 is second century B.C., 2 is first century C.E.).

Tobit (second century B.C.).

Judith (first century B.C.).

Esther x, 4–xvi (ditto).

Wisdom (ditto).

Ecclesiasticus (second century B.C.).

Baruch (first century B.C.).

The Song of the Three Holy Children (Greek Period).

The History of Susannah (Greek Period).²

Bel and the Dragon (Greek Period).

The Prayer of Manasses (Greek Period).

1 and 2 *Maccabees* (first century B.C.).

Besides these there are the *Targums* and the *Talmud*. The Jews frequently explained in Arabic the meaning of their original scriptures in the form of commentaries, the best of which were repeated and memorized. These were known as the Targums. Further, in course of time, Jewish philosophy and discussions upon law, etc., accumulated, although not yet committed to writing, in a mass of notes which grew into the Talmud, a work

¹ Greek, *Kanōn*, rule.

² The story of Susannah is probably connected with a Babylonian legend of the seduction of two old men by the goddess of love. It is referred to in the Koran (Sura 2, 96).

containing the body of the Jewish civil and religious law, with commentaries thereon, not comprised in the Pentateuch. This, begun in the second century B.C., was not completed until the second century of the Christian Era. The Talmud consists of two parts: "Mishnah" (from *shanah*, to repeat), or text, and "Gemarah," or commentary on the Mishnah. The Mishnah is divided into six sections, dealing with Agriculture (tithes and forbidden mixtures in plants, animals, and garments), Feasts (sabbaths, festivals, fast days, and the principal feasts of Passover, Tabernacles, etc.), Women (marriage, divorce, etc.), Damages (civil and criminal law, ending with *Sayings of the Fathers*, a great ethical work), Sacred Things (sacrifices and the Temple), and Purifications.

CHAPTER VI

SOME OLD TESTAMENT STORIES CONSIDERED

§ 1. *Introduction*

THE method by which the various books of the Old Testament were built up and the sources from which they were derived having been reviewed in the previous chapter, we can now pass on to the consideration of some of the more important stories contained therein.

The Bible, apart from its literary beauties, furnishes one of the most valuable storehouses of information as to the evolution of religious ideas, and it is by keeping this fact always in view that it can be studied with pleasure and profit. Evolution is the key to every process in the world; not only to the formation of the earth as a part of the universe and of the plants and animals upon it, their structure and geographical distribution, but to the progress of man. From what has been said in earlier chapters, it cannot be too much insisted that the process of evolution shows itself as much in man's social habits and conduct as in his origin and the details of his bodily structure. Unless this is realized, it is impossible to understand rightly the connection of events in history and the changes which have taken place in religious thought. Evolution explains the continuity of man's mental development from chipped flints to aeroplanes, from Naturism through Animism to the great religious systems of the world—Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, and Christianity.

The fourteen stories that have been selected for con-

sideration in this chapter form but a small part of the many legends of the Old Testament that are based upon ideas and myths common to all primitive races. To multiply examples would be superfluous where length is a consideration. The Old Testament abounds in folklore, as has been amply shown in Sir James Frazer's work on the subject; even his three volumes by no means exhaust it.

§ 2. *The Story of the Creation*

Each of the first two chapters of *Genesis* contains an account of the creation. The difference between the two is plainly seen by comparison.

The first chapter begins with the statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," after which are created all the various things belonging to the universe in six days, as follows:—*First day* : Heaven and earth; light and darkness. *Second day* : The firmament. *Third day* : Dry land and seas; grass, herbs, and fruit trees. *Fourth day* : Sun, moon, and stars. *Fifth day* : Sea-monsters and winged fowl. *Sixth day* : Cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth, and man. It is specially to be noted that the account states (*Gen.* i, 27) "And God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them.*"

The continuation of this account is in the second and third verses of chap. ii, in which it is stated that on the seventh day God rested, "and God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."

In the second account, which begins at ii, 4, it is said, without any reference to the number of days occupied in the work, that God made:—

1. Heaven and earth.
2. Man.
3. The Garden of Eden, with its trees, including (*Gen.*

ii; 9) "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

4. Then God made the beasts and fowls (*Gen.* ii, 19), which he brought to man, who named them at his request (ii, 20).

5. Finally, because it was "not good that man should be alone," God created woman out of one of Adam's ribs (ii, 21-24).

Now the way in which the solar and other stellar systems, the earth, animals, and plants, and finally man, were evolved has been described in Chapter I. The truth of what has been there stated is now accepted by every one who has any knowledge of the subject. It can be seen clearly therefrom how legendary are both of the Old Testament accounts. Yet they are still taught in schools, churches, and Sunday schools by those who can easily learn the truth, if they are not already aware of it.

It will naturally be asked why these two accounts are found in the Bible, which is held to be "inspired," and why they differ. The answer lies in the fact that there were two original sources, as explained in the last chapter.

The second account (*Gen.* ii, 4-25) is the older, that J E. source already mentioned, while the first (*Gen.* i, 1-ii, 3) belongs to the P. Code, compiled by the Jewish priesthood after the Exile. The two versions have been badly put together.

The old account is the more primitive and exhibits the God acting like a man, whereas in the Priestly version he is represented on a higher scale, more as an abstract idea—a God who can make things by the simple process of telling them to be there. The Priestly writer, moreover, makes a special point of the hallowing of the seventh day. This was done for special reasons. Before the Exile, the seventh was one of the many ordinary feast days, and appears to have been so in most parts of the East. During the long captivity in Babylon the

Jews were too unhappy to make festival, and their rest days were not likely to be particularly joyful. The Exile ended and the captives back in Jerusalem, Ezra produced a new Book of the Law, in which the Creation story was re-written upon the lines of the Babylonian myth, and the hallowing of the seventh day was introduced as a moral for teaching purposes to put the Jews on a higher moral plane than the surrounding nations. Not different in keeping a sabbath day, however, but in the reason for its observance. The Babylonians had their seventh-day sabbaths, following the phases of the moon, whom they called "Lord of Rest." Work on such days was forbidden, chiefly as bringing ill-luck upon the worker. The Jews, in adopting such rest-days, sought to justify themselves by the statement that the seventh day had been made holy by the God resting thereon from his labours.

The Hebrew story of the creation can be compared with the creation myths of other primitive peoples. The oldest of these myths are three, which probably had been handed down from barbaric traditions. In the Babylonian myth, derived from the Akkado-Sumerian story, man was made from clay by Bel. In Egypt the god Khnoumou, and in Greece Prometheus, fashioned him from clay upon a potter's wheel.

The various creation stories met with among primitive races of to-day need not be described in detail. They have been patiently collected by Sir James Frazer in his *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*. They all fall into two classes, which have already been discussed in Chapter II (p. 43).

The Jewish story was naturally derived from the folklore of the country in which they lived, the myths of the Semites of which they were a part. It was the Akkado-Sumerian legend (see p. 67). In this poem the gods first made light. Then Tiamat, the ocean goddess, rebelled against them, and Marduk (one of the names of

Bel) offered to subdue her provided the rule of heaven and earth were given to him. He divided her into two, and with the pieces made the upper and lower waters, sea and sky (a myth borrowed by the Egyptians). Next were created the heavenly bodies—sun, moon, and stars. The resemblance to the account in *Genesis*, in which light was first created and then the upper and lower waters separated by a firmament, is very close. The order of creation of the other objects is nearly the same in the two myths, the only difference being that in the Akkado-Sumerian tale the heavenly bodies were made second, and in the Jewish version fourth. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that the Chaldeans regarded the study of the stars (astrology) as of the highest importance.

§ 3. *The Fall of Man*

The story told in *Genesis* of the fall of man and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden belongs to the explanations by which primitive man sought to account for the coming of death into the world (see Chapter II, p. 45). Such myths are very old indeed, and the tale in *Genesis* was derived from Babylonian folk-lore, handed on from the Akkado-Sumerians. It was altered by the priests to suit Jewish ideas after the Captivity.

As was pointed out in Chapter II, there is a belief among primitive peoples all over the world that animals which are able to shed their skins renew their life by so doing and are immortal. Such creatures are serpents, lizards, and insects. The belief sometimes includes birds, which moult and grow fresh plumage. The Jews thought that the eagle became young again by casting its feathers—a view expressed in *Psalms* ciii, 5: "Thy youth is renewed like that of the eagles."

With some races (Admiralty Islands, Central Celebes, parts of New Guinea, etc.) it is believed that men once possessed the power of casting their skins, and were

immortal until they lost the ability to do so by the foolishness of an old woman, just as Eve was responsible for the fall of man in the Jewish myth. Among the Bahuars, who live east of Cochin-China, the immortality of man was believed to be due to burial beneath a certain tree, the mysterious power of which ensured their rising again from the dead after a short repose.

Practically all these primitive myths explain that the god intended to bestow immortality upon man, but that, either by the stupidity, indolence, or jealousy of the messenger (usually a snake, lizard, or bird) sent to inform him of the intention, or by the fault of man himself, he lost his opportunity.

With this knowledge of primitive folk-lore, the story in *Genesis* can be understood. It is distinctly stated (*Gen.* ii, 9) that there were two trees "in the midst of the garden," the tree of life *and* the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, and man is warned (*Gen.* ii, 16, 17) to abstain from eating the fruit of the latter *only*. This portion of the book belongs to the older (J E.) source. Chapter iii describes the "Fall," and contains no mention of the tree of life until the last three verses, wherein it is stated that God, after expressing anxiety lest man "take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever," "placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," thus preventing Adam from eating its fruit and so achieving immortality. This chapter belongs to the Priestly source, as cherubim and angels, derived from the Persian mythology, were not brought into the Jewish ideas of spiritual beings until that period.

The myth, therefore, like many other primitive tales, is an attempt to explain why man is not immortal, and the motive of the serpent in beguiling Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge was probably to divert her attention from the tree of life and cheat man

of immortality. Possibly in the earliest form of the myth the serpent, having been successful in his plot, ate the fruit of the tree of life and became able to cast his skin and thereby live for ever.

§ 4. *The Story of Noah's Flood*

The story of the Deluge, or Noah's Flood, is another study in folk-lore, and one of great interest. It was derived from a Babylonian myth, of which the original record was discovered in 1872, written in the Semitic language and dated about 1977 B.C. This was itself derived from an older myth, in the Sumerian tongue, of the time of Hammurabi (see p. 67)—that is, 2250 B.C.

Attention to the story in *Genesis* vi, 5-ix, 17, easily reveals the fact that it embodies two distinct and discrepant accounts. They are derived from the two sources J E. and P. These two accounts are best compared by placing them in parallel columns:—

J E.	P.
<i>The Animals.</i> There were taken into the Ark seven male and seven female of the "clean," and two, male and female, of the "unclean."	Two animals only, male and female.
<i>Duration of the Flood.</i> Forty days and forty nights, with three weeks until the waters subsided—i.e., sixty-one days.	150 days. The waters took three months to uncover the mountain tops and two months more for the earth to become dry.
<i>Causes of the Flood.</i> Rain.	Rain and "subterranean waters."
<i>Sacrifice.</i> Noah built an altar and sacrificed.	Sacrifice not mentioned, because the Priests considered it highly improper for any one but a member of their own order to conduct so sacred a rite.
<i>The Rainbow.</i> Not mentioned.	Introduced, because the idea of a covenant between Yahweh and the Jews had arisen after the time of the earlier source.

The older (J E.) narrative agrees fairly closely with the Babylonian legend, both mentioning *seven* days' warning, *seven* of each animal, and *seven* days' interval between each despatch of the dove. Seven is a magic or sacred number among many primitive peoples, is frequently mentioned in the Bible and other sacred books, and survives among ourselves in some quaint beliefs and customs. There are also some resemblances (as the description of the construction of the ark) between the Babylonian and the Priestly stories.

There are other flood-legends spread widely over the earth, and they often differ one from another. Only a few of these need be mentioned; a very full account of them will be found in Sir James Frazer's *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*.¹

The ancient Greeks had three flood-stories, and they are of great interest as helping to show how such myths arose. The first flood was in the time of Ogyges, and was based probably on variations in size of the Copaïc Lake, in Boëtia. The second was Deucalion's flood, in which he is described as building a ship and so saving himself and his wife. This flood was associated with the Thessalian Mount Othrys, and was probably framed to account for the strait between Thessaly and Eubœa. The third flood was in the time of Dardanus, and is connected with the town of Pheneus, situated upon the shore of Lake Phonia.

In connection with Deucalion's Flood, it is interesting to find that the modern Turks have a tradition of a great deluge due to the sudden opening of the Bosphorus, for which they consider Alexander the Great responsible. Such legends belong to the *Myths of Observation*, framed to account for some natural formation (see p. 53), or for the discovery of marine fossils in places remote from the

¹ The Semang of the Malay Peninsula have vague ideas of the destruction of the world by a big conflagration in place of a deluge myth. Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, ii, 219.

sea. In Persia a flood is made to account for the saltness of the sea, for example.

In China there is a tradition of a flood in the reign of the Emperor Yao, in the twenty-fourth century B.C.; it refers to a local inundation of the Yellow River, and neither the Chinese nor the Japanese have any tradition of a universal flood.

In New Guinea, Melanesia, and Polynesia there are numerous flood stories, in many of which the inundation was caused by the sea; in Fiji canoes used to be kept ready in case another flood should occur.

In Iceland (where the flood is believed to have occurred before the Creation), Australia, India, Burma, North, Central, and South America, Wales, and among the Gypsies (who probably brought them from India) flood legends are to be found. In some cases they show evidence of having arisen by Christian and Mohammedan influence.

In Africa traditions of a great flood are scarcely ever met with, though there are traces of such stories in North Guinea and on the Congo. In East Africa any such tradition is due to the influence of Christian or Mohammedan missionaries.

When the various flood stories, of which only a small portion has been cited, are examined they fall into two classes :—

1. Those due to missionary influence by the teaching of the Bible or the Koran. The result of such teaching is obvious.

2. Geographical and geological influences. The formation of seas, the flooding of rivers, and the occurrence of fossils are now satisfactorily explained in the light of modern science. Geology makes it clear that no catastrophes of a universal character occur; on the contrary, changes in the earth's surface take place slowly. But for primitive peoples unacquainted with these facts, myths of observation were necessary to account for them. In

islands, like those of the Pacific, earthquakes and huge tidal waves are the usual agents in flood legends; while in low-lying countries watered by big rivers local inundations form their basis. In such cases flood stories are merely exaggerated reports of actual events which, by transmission, have become partly legendary and partly mythical. Where a primitive race knew of no world beyond their own strip of country, any such flood legend would be considered as universal. The Sumerian tradition probably originated in this way in an inundation of the Euphrates, possibly caused by heavy rains—a view which accords with the alleged cause of the Bible flood. There are many instances of memorable floods in Holland, and Motley¹ recalls the story of the origin of the Zuyder Zee in the thirteenth century. Two of the Greek flood legends are accounted for by inundations caused by lakes, while Deucalion's flood and the modern Turkish tradition try to explain the formation of sea-straits. It is interesting to note that, according to Sir James Frazer (*Folk-lore in the Old Testament*), there were no flood-legends in Egypt, simply because the ancient Egyptians were used to the regular annual rise of the Nile and the consequent flooding of the narrow strip of country through which it runs.²

§ 5. *The Tower of Babel*

The story of the Tower of Babel is an instance of a double myth. In one, a primitive people wished to account for the diversity of tongues; in the other, the conception of the sky as a dome naturally excited the

¹ *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (ed. 1913), vol. i, p. 35.

² There is, however, a legend of a flood, brought about by the god Temu, preserved in chap. clxxv of the *Book of the Dead* (Papyrus of Ani in the Brit. Mus.). The text is, however, so mutilated that it is impossible to piece together the details. It is significant that the early civilizations were around the Mediterranean, and that in the eastern part of that sea considerable land subsidences have taken place comparatively late in the human period. It is a fairly legitimate surmise that traces of these subsidences may have formed the foundation for a tradition of the flood.

desire to climb up to it. Among many primitive races there are numerous myths dealing with these problems.

It is to be noted that in *Genesis* there is no mention of the origin of the gift of speech; possibly the faculty was taken for granted. It has been shown in Chapter II (p. 22) how speech was developed, and it would not have been possible for any myths to have been framed or transmitted until man had acquired considerable facility in language.

But, as with other primitive races, the diversity of tongues attracted the Jews, and they endeavoured to account for it by the Babel story, in which they combined it with the idea of an attempt to reach the sky by climbing.

The Jews, being a branch of the great Semitic race, and coming originally from Chaldæa, must have been familiar with the great temple towers of its cities. Of these there were many; they were, indeed, an outstanding feature of the architecture of that civilization, and the remains of two are still in existence. One of them was the Tower of Marduk, now forming the mound of Babil. The other, the Tower of Nebo, is situated about eight or ten miles from Babylon, and its modern name is Bis-Nimrud. This tower was never finished, which may possibly account for a part of the Babel myth.

There was such a temple tower at Ur of the Chaldees, the city from which Abraham is supposed to have set out for Canaan. It has been suggested that the memory of this tower may have been preserved because the structure belonged to the city from which the Jewish nation came.

Another suggestion is that the word "Ba-bel," which means "Gate of God," was mistaken by the Jews for "Balbel," a verb signifying "to confound."

Many similar stories exist concerned either with the diversity of languages or the idea of climbing up to heaven; and in some the two are combined. Such legends are met with, for example, in Africa, Burma, California

(in this tale there is no mention of any tower), Mexico (connected with the great pyramid of Cholula), and the Admiralty Islands. Many of them show traces of missionary influences. This is especially the case with the Mexican, Admiralty Islands, and Burmese legends. The Karens of Burma have a special aptitude for adopting Christian legends and camouflaging them with local ideas, so that they are often difficult to recognize under the disguise.

§ 6. *Abraham and Isaac*

Genesis xii contains the well-known story in which Yahweh tested Abraham by ordering him to sacrifice his only son Isaac, and when he found the patriarch willing substituted a ram for the boy. This story belongs to that class of myth which explains customs (see Chapter III, p. 53). In this case the myth explains the change from human to animal sacrifice.

The custom of human sacrifice has been of world-wide existence among primitive races. There is no need to go into its origin here beyond pointing out that it may have arisen originally from cannibalism, when victims were eaten in order that any special virtue they possessed (as bravery in battle or wisdom in counsel) might pass into the person who devoured them; or, as among the Maoris of New Zealand, from scarcity of animal food. Later the practice of human sacrifice grew into a ritual, when human victims were killed either to appease the spirits of those slain in a tribal war, to bribe the gods in time of pestilence and famine, as thank-offerings, or that their ghosts might accompany a chief into the spirit land. In some of these sacrifices the victim was eaten.

With human sacrifices to vegetation-gods, the ceremonial eating of the victim was a very common part of the rite; and as this victim was at first supposed to represent the god, and later actually to be the deity himself, the custom arose of "eating the god" with the

idea that a part of his divine nature would enter into the worshippers. As man gradually became more civilized and more humane, the custom of human sacrifice was given up, an animal being exchanged for the man. Later still a cake was substituted for a living victim, often made in the shape of man or animal, and this was ceremonially eaten. Last of all, bread and wine, representing the body and blood of the victim, were used.

In this way the custom of eating ceremonial (or sacramental) meals, of a sacrificial kind, at which the god himself was supposed to be eaten, was evolved. Such sacraments, called "Eucharists,"¹ are very widespread. A characteristic of most of them was that originally it was the king himself who represented the god and was slain; later the king's eldest son took his place, and, later still, a condemned criminal was substituted. Further, as the king was considered to be divine, the substituted victim became the "son of the god."

The ancient god Kronos (who was the same as Saturn and the Semitic god El) is said to have sacrificed his "only begotten son." Now the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were probably ancient Semitic deities, and Isaac has been identified mythologically as a sun-god. It may also be pointed out here that his Hebrew name of "Yishak" is very near to that of "Yeschu," which is the Hebrew form of "Jesus."

It is clear from the Old Testament that it was at one time the custom among the early Jews, as among the Phœnicians, to sacrifice the first-born of man as well as that of animals. Later, the first-born of man was "redeemed" by the substitution of an animal, generally a lamb or a kid. This is indicated, for example, in the following passages:—

"And the LORD (Yahweh) spake unto Moses, saying, sanctify unto me all the first-born" (*Exod.* xiii, 12).

¹ Greek, *Eu*, well; *chairō*, to rejoice.

"All the first-born of thy sons shalt thou redeem" (*Exod.* xxxiv, 20).

"And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of thy daughters shalt thou eat" (*Levit.* xxvi, 29).

"Nevertheless the first-born of man shalt thou surely redeem" (*Numbers* xviii, 15).

The fact of this early Jewish sacrifice of sons is confessed in the story of Abraham and Isaac, which supplies an excuse for the substitution of an animal. The story is, therefore, a myth framed to account for the change, for among primitive peoples the difficulty of making them relinquish an old rite is so great that a mere order to do so is of no avail unless it is supported by some legend which makes it appear that the command comes from the god.

In connection with the myth of Abraham and Isaac must be mentioned the story of Jephthah's daughter (*Judges* xi). This story is one of many tales told in Arab and other tradition, based upon the sacrifice of a virgin goddess. Only a usual practice of human sacrifice could allow the idea of the application of the vow to a human being. The story of Cymon and Iphigenia is a similar myth. Such sacrifice of virgins was practised by the early Greeks, and the Greek writer Pausanias (iv, 9) tells of the sacrifice of a virgin imposed by the Oracle at Delphi on the Messenians in their wars with the Spartans.

§ 7. *The Story of Jacob at the Ford of Jabbok*

There is a story told in *Genesis* xxxii, 24-32, of how Jacob, having come down from the mountains of Gilead, crossed the River Jabbok with his family, and, having seen them pass over in safety, remained behind at the ford. Here he met with a mysterious person with whom he wrestled "until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched

the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him." The baffled stranger implored Jacob to let him go, but the patriarch refused to do so unless his nocturnal opponent "blessed him." The stranger asked him his name, and, when it was told him, said: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel," which means (as indicated in the margin of the Revised Version) "He who striveth with God." And Jacob called the place "Peniel" (that is, "the face of God"), because he had "seen God face to face." The last verse states that "Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip."

This story is introduced here because it strikingly illustrates how much there is of myth and folk-lore in the Old Testament. These nine verses contain folk-lore relating to local nature gods and to the mysterious magic in names (see p. 37), with two myths of explanation, one accounting for the name of Israel, the other for the custom of not eating the sinew of the hip.

The continual motion of rivers and seas naturally gave primitive man the idea that they were alive, and in the folk-lore of every people is to be found evidence of the belief in spirits of the water. The Greeks and Romans had their river gods and naiads of the springs, of whom our "Father Thames" and the patron saints of wells and springs are survivals. Among all savage races the idea exists of water-sprites (mostly malignant and requiring propitiation by offerings), leading to river worship. The Bantu peoples of South and South-East Africa, the Banyoro (who offer sacrifices when crossing the Nile), the inhabitants of Congoland and South Nigeria, the Badajas of Southern India, the Todas, and many others, believe that rivers and springs have their guardian gods and spirits. The custom of propitiating them at fords is

very common, for among primitive folk (see Chapter II, p. 34) a man is never drowned, but dragged down and strangled by the water-spirit.

It is probable that in the story of the ford of the Jabbok the mysterious stranger with whom Jacob wrestled by night was the guardian spirit of the river, or, as the Arabs would say, the genie of the ford. There are similar legends of Greek heroes wrestling with water-sprites. In Jacob's case an old folk-legend has been turned by the Old Testament writer into a story of how the patriarch struggled with Yahweh in order to frame a myth to explain both his change of name and the prohibition against eating a certain portion of the thigh.

The belief in the magic of names is apparent in the story of how the spirit begged Jacob to tell him his name. Jacob complied only when he had the spirit in his power and was certain that he would use it for a good purpose, and, once the god had ascertained it, he employed it to work beneficent magic in a blessing.

The prohibition as to eating certain portions of animals is another widespread custom. The Jews were prohibited from eating one of the sinews or muscles of the thigh. There are like customs, with myths to account for them, among the North American Indians; and there is an ancient Mexican story similar to that of Jacob's midnight wrestle at the ford of Jabbok.

§ 8. *Joshua*

It has already been pointed out (Chapter V, p. 88) that the book of *Joshua* describes what was probably a long conflict lasting over one hundred years, and essays to fit it into the life of one man, one generation, and one campaign. This man was Joshua, the popular hero, whose name (also spelt Jehoshua) is in Hebrew "Yehoshua," a word meaning "Yah (or Yahweh) is welfare," and equivalent to "Saviour." It is important to note

that the Greek form is "Jesous," which is the same as Jesus.

A study of the book of *Joshua* shows it to be constructed of very miscellaneous fragments. It contains history, both true and false, mixed with hero-legend, myth, and folk-lore. It has been suggested that Joshua was a successful war-leader whose name was handed down, and around whom accumulated many legends and traditions—a common occurrence with leaders of primitive races. It may be possible that Joshua was the popular hero of the early Jews until the growing power of the priesthood caused his tradition to be overshadowed by that of Moses. Once a race had become established and recognized as a nation, and its priesthood had come to be invested with great power, the latter, from motives of self-interest, would magnify religion and laws to the disadvantage of all else. The Jewish priests would, therefore, exalt Moses the lawgiver above Joshua the general.

There is evidence to show that Joshua is not historical, but a myth-duplicate of Moses, whose work he repeated, as will be seen by a comparison of *Exodus* and *Joshua*. In Jewish tradition he is specially associated with the choosing of the Paschal lamb and the rites of the Passover (*Josh.* v, 10) and circumcision (v, 2-10).

No less than six of the acts of Moses are ascribed also to Joshua. As Moses passed the Red Sea dry-shod (*Exod.* xiv, 21), so did Joshua cross the Jordan (*Josh.* iii, 17; iv, 18). Both appointed twelve rulers (*Exod.* xviii, 25 and *Josh.* iv, 2). As Moses set up twelve pillars under Mount Sinai (*Exod.* xxiv, 4-5),¹ so did Joshua set up twelve stones (in *Josh.* iv, 8, he does so "in the midst of Jordan"; in iv, 21, they are set up in Gilgal²). In *Exod.*

¹ It may be conveniently mentioned here that so learned a divine as Dr. Sayce has expressed the decided opinion that the Israelites were never near Mt. Sinai at any period of their wanderings.

² The word *Gilgal* means a circle. There are many such circles of stones in Palestine, similar to the prehistoric circles (so-called "Druid circles") of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages in Europe.

xii, 44, Moses instituted circumcision, and in *Josh.* xv, 2-10, Joshua revives the rite; similarly, both Moses (*Exod.* xii, 14-18) and Joshua (*Josh.* v, 10) instituted the Passover. Lastly, Moses (*Exod.* xxxi, 18) and Joshua (*Josh.* viii, 32) both wrote the law upon stones.

There is a remarkable parallel between Moses and the Greek god Dionysus. As Moses was set afloat in a rush-made ark, so Dionysus was carried in a basket in the sacred procession. Both Moses and Dionysus obtained water by striking the earth with a rod, crossed the sea with their hosts, and wrote laws upon tables of stone. There are other similarities between the two,¹ but these will suffice. Probably Joshua, Moses, and Dionysus are all variants of the same myth.

Joshua is credited with one stupendous feat that Moses did not do: he made the sun and moon stand still. Similar legends are not uncommon among primitive folk. In the Peruvian Andes a net was set to catch the sun; in Fiji travellers who feared to be belated tied growing reeds together to delay the setting sun until they reached their destination in safety. For similar reasons in New Guinea the sun is told not to hurry.² In Homer's *Iliad* (xviii, 239) the goddess Hêrê hastens the setting of the sun.

The hero-legend of Joshua had a special vogue in Samaria, and the Samaritans possessed an uncanonical book of *Joshua* in Arabic, a medieval production, professedly translated from a Hebrew original. It is now considered that he was once a Palestine deity, possibly one of the gods or spirits of agriculture slain annually to come to life again as personating the death and reappearance of the crops. The book of *Joshua* is an instance of how the Jews could manufacture false history, to the national advantage, out of popular myth.

¹ J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 99 sq.

² Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, i, 117.

§ 9. *The Story of Samson*

The story of Samson in *Judges* xiv-xvi is in curious contrast to the stories contained in the remainder of the book. He is shown rather as a filibuster, a sort of Rob Roy Macgregor, than as a grave ruler of Israel. As Sir James Frazer has said, the description given of him "owes more to the brush of the story-teller than to the pen of the historian."

The tales told in the book of *Judges* of Jephthah, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson belong to the class of hero-legend which are common to all nations, and resemble other stories of local or tribal heroes. When the Jews were united into a nation these traditions became common property, and were incorporated by the Jewish writers into their historical books in accordance with their ideas of writing history.

The legend of Samson calls up a whole host of folk-legends in which the hair is considered as the seat of bodily strength. In the Greek version of the Old Testament there are some lines which are omitted in the revised version of the English Bible. They come between the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of *Judges* xvi, the whole reading as follows, the restored verse being indicated by italics: "And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said to her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web *And makest (the whole) fast with the pin, then shall I become weak and like any other man. And Delilah made him sleep, and wove the seven locks of his head with the web.* And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and plucked away the pin of the beam and the web."

There are ancient Greek legends similar to that of Samson and Delilah, of which the story of Nisus is an

example. Nisus was King of Megara, and was there besieged by Minos. He had a daughter, Scylla, who became enamoured of Minos, and, playing the traitor to her father, pulled out the purple or golden hair which grew on the top of his head, and upon which his life depended. Nisus thereupon died, and Minos obtained possession of the city. So horrified was he, however, at Scylla's unnatural conduct that he caused her to be drowned in the Saronic Gulf. In the Island of Nias there is a similar legend concerning a king whose life was in his hair, and who was betrayed to his enemies by his daughter.

In the East Indies and many other places there is a belief that a person's strength lies in the hair, while in France, Scotland, Mexico, and some parts of India the hair is supposed to be the seat of the evil powers of witches and wizards.

A large class of folk-legends exists all over the world in which the life of either a hero or a wizard is carefully hidden away in some inaccessible spot, the secret of which is carefully guarded. These myths arose from the primitive belief that a man's soul was a distinct part of him, capable of being deposited in a place of safety. Stories based upon this conception of the "external soul" are common in folk-lore, and are to be found among children's fairy-tales. A good example is the Norse tale of "The giant who had no heart in his body." One of the most characteristic is the Hindoo story of the magician "Punchkin," whose life was hidden in a parrot in a cage, placed beneath one of six chattees¹ of water in a circle of palm-trees in the middle of a thick jungle hundreds of thousands of miles away from where its owner was. Once the parrot was obtained by his enemy, Punchkin was in his power; when its wings were torn away his

¹ Chattees are the earthenware pots used in India to contain drinking water. The story of Punchkin and its congeners has been ably discussed by Edward Clodd in the *Folk-lore Journal*, ii (1884), pp. 288-303.

arms dropped off, and when the bird's neck was wrung the magician died.

Similar legends exist in Slavonic and Celtic folk-lore. To the former belong the Russian story of Koshschei the Deathless, whose life was hidden in an egg in a duck in a hare in a casket under an oak, and the Serbian tale of Truesteel. Indeed, this particular type of legend is so ancient that it is found in the Egyptian story of *The Two Brothers*, which was written about 1300 B.C.

The story of Samson is seen to be, therefore, one of many variants of a very ancient folk-legend based upon the conception of an "external soul."

§ 10. *The Reputed Wisdom of Solomon*

The reputation of Solomon for wisdom has been celebrated alike by Jews in the Old Testament and Moham-medans in the Koran, and legends concerning him have been widely current in the East. In the Old Testament, in addition to the accounts of his achievements in the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, some of the *Psalms*, most of the *Proverbs*, with the whole of *Ecclesiastes* and the *Song of Songs*, are attributed to him. When the evidence comes to be examined, however, it will be seen that his exalted fame for great wisdom rests upon no surer foundation than tradition. The stories concerning it belong to the Myths about Persons (see p. 53). As in the case of a much later historical personage—that "wise fool," James I of England—tales of his wisdom and scholarship belong to the after-growth of legend.

Solomon was by no means the magnificent potentate that he has been made out. He obtained the throne by a successful *coup d'état*, and established himself thereon by murder. He employed forced labour, indistinguishable from slavery, to build his palace and the Temple, and appears generally to have been as despotic and oppressive as most Eastern rulers. To the Jews, however, he was

the "Great King" who brought about their union and gained for them the position of a nation to be reckoned with by their neighbours, although he appears neither to have enlarged his kingdom nor to have been an absolutely independent monarch. Above all, he founded the first Temple. It is for this latter reason that they specially venerated him. With a people that developed so powerful a priesthood, it was but natural that the sovereign who built the first Temple to the glorification of Yahweh and the increased revenue of his priests should receive their highest praise and honour, and that his many less worthy actions should escape condemnation by the priestly historians.

Legends of wisdom and magnificence, therefore, fostered by the most powerful section of the Jews, accumulated around Solomon, and in the first book of *Kings* (iv, 29-34) it is for this that he is expressly eulogized. He is "wiser than all men"—"spake three thousand proverbs and his songs were a thousand and five"; he understood trees, beasts, fowls, "creeping things," and fishes, and "there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." Among Eastern peoples his name has been venerated and used in magic as of great power (another instance of the magic in names), as may be read in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. The verses above quoted have been even considered by the credulous to mean that he understood the *language* of trees and animals! In the Koran (xxvii, 17) Solomon is made to say: "O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and are endued with everything. This is indeed a clear boon from God."

The story of the Queen of Sheba, or the Sabeans (1 *Kings* x, 1-13), is an example of popular legend. Similar tales are told in the Koran and the Mahabharata. Contests of wit, especially in the guise of riddles, form the basis of many Eastern stories; and there is one

famous tale, concerning two rival Rajahs of Celebes, which closely parallels that of Solomon and the Queen.

The well-known story of Solomon's judgment between the two women who disputed the ownership of the baby (1 *Kings* iii, 16-28) is another widespread Eastern legend, one specimen of which is to be found in the literature of the Jains, in India. A tale almost exactly similar is related of the Buddha. In this, which is more pleasing than the Solomon story, the women having promised to abide by his judgment, the Buddha ordered a line to be drawn upon the ground and the child laid upon it. The Buddha then directed the women to seize the child by its arms and legs and pull, saying, "He shall be son of her who pulls him over the line." The real mother said: "Let her take the baby; I cannot bear to see him hurt." Whereupon the Buddha asked of the onlookers, "Whose hearts are tender to the children?" They replied, "Oh! Pundit, mothers' hearts are tender!" "Which think you is the mother?" questioned the Buddha, to which they all answered: "She who let it go is its mother"; and the child was returned to her.

Besides all the hero and wisdom legends written around Solomon by the writers of the sacred books in order to glorify his name, others were probably added by later writers. Of the three books of which he himself was supposed to be the author, the *Song of Songs* was so assigned because it chanced to contain his name (see p. 95). *Ecclesiastes* begins with the verse: "The words of Koheleth, the son of David, King in Jerusalem"—meaning, of course, Solomon, as there was known to history no king who was a son of David called Koheleth. In the English Bible the word is translated "The Preacher," but many Hebrew scholars consider this meaning improbable. The Jewish Rabbis endeavoured to account for "Koheleth" by inventing a legend in which Solomon made Yahweh angry by his conceit over his wealth and wisdom; wherefore he sent the monarch wandering over the world

preaching, while a demon reigned in Jerusalem in his likeness.

The book of *Proverbs*, as has been seen (p. 94), is a collection of the sayings of wise men loosely strung together. They are attributed to Solomon, Agur the son of Jakeh, King Lemuel, and other Sages. It has already been mentioned (p. 80) that there was at Elephantine, in Egypt, a colony of Jews who settled there in the time of the Persian kings. In 1904 nine or ten perfectly preserved rolls of papyrus were found there. These documents related to the affairs of the colony, and among them was one entitled "Sayings of the Wise and Skilful Scribe, Ahikar by name, which he taught to his Son." This Ahikar was prime minister of Assyria in the reign of Sennacherib, by whom he was sent to Egypt, where he showed his great wisdom in a trial of wits with the Pharaoh. Stories of such subtle contests are still very popular in Eastern countries, and are not without appreciation in the West. The manuscript found at Elephantine was probably written specially for the Jewish colony about five hundred years before the Christian era. The "Sayings of Ahikar" are, however, much older than this particular copy, and were well known and much prized by the Jews. They are mentioned in the *Book of Tobit*, one of the apocryphal Hebrew scriptures. A number of these sayings were probably incorporated in the book of *Proverbs*, as the following specimen extracts, out of many, will show:—

Proverbs.

Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beat him with a rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with a rod, and shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.

A stone is heavy, and the sand is weighty; but a fool's

Sayings of Ahikar.

If thou strike him with a rod, he does not die. But if thou leave him to his own will, he becomes a thief, and they take him to the gallows, and to death.

Son! I have lifted iron and I have lifted stones upon my

vexation is heavier than them both.

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he is overthrown.

shoulders, and it was better for me than to dwell with the ignorant and the fool.

My Son! Envy not the prosperity of thine enemy, and rejoice not at his adversity.

§ 11. *The Story of Daniel*

The book of *Daniel* is a striking example of the manner in which the Jews could confuse and falsify history for the furtherance of their own ends and the stimulation of Jewish patriotism.

For years the book of *Daniel* was mistaken for prophecy, and was believed to have been written during the Exile and to predict the coming of the *Messiah*.¹ Later it was supposed by the Christians to foretell the coming of Christ. It was probably written, however, to stimulate the Maccabæan rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes. This famous revolt was no doubt due really to quarrels among the Jews themselves, but the excuse given by them for its occurrence was that Epiphanes had issued an edict enforcing Greek worship throughout his dominions, and had established an altar to the Olympian Zeus (the Jupiter of the Romans) in the shrine of Yahweh at Jerusalem. Such an act would naturally be considered by the Jews as a terrible profanation of their most sacred place. The book of *Daniel* was written for purposes of propaganda; to light up fresh hope of liberty and gain recruits for the Maccabæan revolt. This rising was the work of the Jewish priest Mattathias and his five sons, John, Simon, Judas Maccabæus, Eleazar, and Jonathan, from whom it was named.

The book of *Daniel* was written at the period of the

¹ The Hebrew word *Mēshiāch* means "anointed," and was applied by the Jews to an expected ruler who would deliver them from all their troubles and firmly establish the nation (see p. 143).

Greek rule, about 164 B.C., and the "end" spoken of by the author meant the termination of the troubles of the Jewish people. His knowledge of the past history of his nation was remarkably inaccurate, as the following facts will clearly show:—

1. The opening chapter entirely disagrees with 2 *Kings* xxiii–xxiv in making Nebuchadrezzar (called by Daniel, who was presumably well acquainted with his real name of Nabu-kudur-uzur, "Nebuchadnezzar") take Jerusalem in the third instead of the eleventh year of the reign of Jehoiakin, King of Judah.

2. Nebuchadrezzar had no son Belshazzar (*Dan.* v, 1 and 2), nor was there a Darius or an Ahasuerus in the days described in *Daniel*.¹

3. The "writing on the wall" (*Dan.* vi, 25) cannot be translated by means of any vocabulary of the Babylonian language. Further, Daniel could not have spoken in Aramaic (translated in ii, 4, as "the Syrian language"), because it was not used in his country until much later. Aramaic is used in *Daniel* from ii, 4, to end of vii.

4. The book contains a number of Macedonian words, although it is alleged to have been written at a period when the Greeks were not yet heard of.

5. At the time of the Exile the books of *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Zechariah*, from which Daniel quotes, did not exist; and the Jews had no idea of a future life, nor had they reached to the conception of a Gabriel or a Michael. The later Jewish ideas of the Kingdom of God and the end of the world were derived from the Persians, just as their winged angels were obtained from the Babylonian sculptures.

6. The date of the book has been determined from chapter xi, which refers to events in the Greek period, the time at which it was written.

¹ The actual history as ascertained from inscriptions and the false history in *Daniel* are decisively compared in Mr. Chilperic Edwards's *The Old Testament*, pp. 88–90.

7. In *Dan.* xi, 45, the death of Antiochus is prophesied in the words: "And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet shall he come to an end and none shall help him." Antiochus Epiphanes was, however, killed in a raid on the Persian city of Tabæ, which is over three hundred miles from the Caspian Sea and over five hundred miles from the Persian Gulf.

§ 12. *The Story of Esther*

The book of *Esther* (which, by the way, never mentions the name of Yahweh) is another example of false history, founded, in this instance, upon an ancient myth, and designed to stimulate Jewish patriotism.

Ahasuerus, the Persian king mentioned, is the Hebrew name for Xerxes, concerning whom a great deal is known, because the Greek historian Herodotus, who was born two years after he began to reign, wrote his history. In this nothing whatever is said of Vashti or Esther, but there is plenty of information about his queen. Xerxes was not permitted to marry any one not descended from certain noble families, and his queen was his cousin Amestris, daughter of Otanes. They were married before the third year, and she was alive after the seventh year of his reign. Yet in *Esther* i, 9, Vashti is described as his queen in the third year of his reign, and in ii, 16, Esther is married to him in the seventh year. There is, therefore, no room for Esther, save in the doubtful character of concubine—an idea which would have been essentially repugnant to Jewish pride.

Neither *Ezra* nor *Nehemiah* mentions the story of Esther, although it would reflect much credit upon the Jews, and when Ahasuerus is referred to (*Ezra* iv, 6) it is as being hostile to that nation.

From the evidence, therefore, the story of Esther has no foundation in history. Probably it is really a romance,

based upon Babylonian myth, and adapted to the aggrandizement of Jewish importance. The labours of men learned in folk-lore and ancient religious myth have shown that the names of the characters in the story are Hebrew versions of those of early Chaldæan gods. Esther is the same as Ishtar (Ashtaroth), an ancient Semitic goddess of love, marriage, and fertility; Mordecai is Marduk, a Babylonian deity; Haman is an old Elamite god. So that the legend is one of the strife between the gods of Babylonia and Elam. The Jews would have certainly heard of such legends during their fifty years of Exile; and, with their developing sense of poetry, it is quite possible that certain acute scribes might conceive the idea of adapting it to Jewish purposes, and make a story out of it reflecting credit upon their nation.

Sir James Frazer, however, in *The Golden Bough*, goes further. He traces the story of Esther to the ancient ceremony of the annual festival of the corn-god and corn-goddess, when two persons were selected vicariously to represent these spirits or deities, treated for a time as royal, and one of them (the male) then sacrificed to ensure good crops. Such ceremonies have been common all the world over (see p. 50), and were celebrated in the Babylonian "Sacæa," the Greek "Cronia" and "Bacchanalia," and the Roman "Saturnalia." Traces of them still survive in the peasant folk-lore of Spring and Harvest festivals, and in our "King and Queen of the May." In these ancient ceremonials the victim was usually selected by drawing lots. Sir James Frazer suggests that the Jewish "Feast of Purim," the name of which is derived from the Hebrew *Pur*, a lot, was merely another such rite; and that, as there is evidence to show that "Purim" was not celebrated by the Jews until after the Exile, it is very possible that it was founded upon the Babylonian "Sacæa." If this be the fact, the story of Esther would belong to the class of myth invented to explain ceremonies and customs (p. 53).

§ 13. *The Story of Jonah*

The story of Jonah, although included among the minor Prophets, is an obvious folk-tale, the product of later Jewish literature, and dating approximately from after the time of Alexander. Probably the author took an old sun-myth, in which the sun was swallowed by a night monster, and adapted it to an historical personage, since Jonah is mentioned in 2 *Kings* xiv, 25, as prophesying that Jereboam II should reign from Hamath to the Dead Sea. This mention does not, however, say anything about the fish-story.

It is popularly supposed that the prophet was swallowed by a whale, but the words used (i, 17) give no warrant for this assumption; they merely say that "The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." The ordinary whale cannot gulp down a man, although the great sperm whale, which takes in large portions of gigantic cuttle-fish, can do so. Such an incident is described by the late Frank Bullen in his narrative of the cruise of the whaling ship *Cachalot*. The whale, however, is a mammal, not a fish, although it was supposed by the ancients to be one. Some of the large sharks are quite capable of swallowing a man entire.

The swallowing-up of men by animals is a common folk-lore story, and is often based upon a sun-myth. Saturn ate his children, with the exception of Jupiter, who was preserved by a subterfuge, and who afterwards made his father disgorge his victims. Sir James Frazer, in *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, relates a New Guinea myth somewhat resembling the Jonah story; and in our own fairy-tales (which are nearly all old folk-lore legends) Tom Thumb is swallowed by a cow and returned; while in the original tale of Red Riding Hood the little girl was eaten by the wolf and recovered, well and happy, by the wood-cutters after they had killed him. They do not,

however, appear to have worried about the unfortunate grandmother.

In Lifu and Uvea,¹ two of the Loyalty islands, there are two folk-tales, both told of women who were swallowed—one accidentally by a whale, the other designedly by a shark. Both attempted to scrape their way out with sharp shells, so that their devourers perished.

§ 14. *An Instance of Primitive Law*

It has been pointed out (p. 29) how, in the stage of Animism, primitive man believed that every natural object, animate and inanimate, possessed its own particular spirit. It was the natural sequence to such a conception that, when any object injured or killed a man, its spirit should be held responsible; in other words, that the primitive personification of external objects should be reflected in primitive legislation.

An interesting instance of such primitive legislation is to be found in *Genesis* ix, 5-6: "Your blood will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it..... Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed"; and in *Exodus* xxi, 28: "And if an ox gore a man or woman, that they die, the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit."

This was a part of the general law of blood-revenge, and, as might be expected, it is based upon a world-wide principle among primitive peoples. Some of these narratives are of great interest; and, no doubt, modern man's habit of kicking viciously the chair against which he has barked his shins, or angrily breaking his golf club when he is "off his drive," owes its origin to a savage

¹ E. Hadfield, *Among the Natives of the Loyalty Group* (Lond., Macmillan; 1920), p. 288. For other Jonah myths see *The Islanders of the Pacific*, by Lt.-Col. T. R. St. Johnston (Lond., Fisher Unwin; 1921), p. 53 sq.

ancestor. The principle of blood-revenge extended among the Kurkis of Chittagong to animals and trees. The Ainos of Japan cut down a tree which hurts or kills a man; the Kachins of Burmah punish a river in which a man has been drowned; homicidal buffaloes are put to death in Malacca and Celebes; thieving dogs are hanged in Africa; and offending weapons are destroyed or thrown away by some savages.

The principle was recognized in ancient Greece and Rome; there were trials of animals and inanimate objects in Athens, and such judicial proceedings are mentioned by Plato in *The Laws*. Not only were animals punished in Rome, but even statues and other inanimate objects which caused the death of human beings were tried for homicide both there and at Olympia.

The ancient superstition was rife in Europe during the Middle Ages; and rats, mice, caterpillars, and other vermin were solemnly tried, warned, exorcised with bell, book, and candle, and even executed by the Ecclesiastical Courts. Many examples are on record up to as late as 1733. It is curious that the Ecclesiastical Courts dealt with wild, and the Civil Tribunals with tame, animals. Some of these proceedings were grotesque in the extreme: a cock was executed at Bâle in 1474 for laying an egg, and on one occasion the bell of La Rochelle was punished for heresy!

In England the custom survived in the "Law of Deodand,"¹ which was not abolished until 1846. By this enactment, any object which had caused the death of a human being, such as a knife, an axe, or the wheel of a coach, was forfeited to the Crown for pious purposes.

§ 15. *The Story of Yahweh*

It is essential that the story of Yahweh, the deity of the Jews, should be examined in some detail, in order

¹ Latin, *Deus*, god; *do*, to give.

properly to grasp the steps in the process of the evolution of the chief Christian Deity through Judaism. There is no more interesting study in the evolution of religious ideas than the narrative of how the Jews came to worship one god to the exclusion of all others. This evolution can be traced practically step by step in the Old Testament, but only the more essential facts can be given here.

The Jews were originally *polytheists*; they became later *monotheists*. Like all primitive races, they passed through the stages of Naturism and Animism. They worshipped the powers of nature—sun, moon, stars, fire, trees, stones. Traces of this worship are met with throughout the Old Testament. In the successive periods of the Patriarchs (who were themselves probably ancient Palestine deities, later transformed by the Jewish writers into human shape) the god is represented under different names at each occasion of a “covenant,” or compact. He is Elohim (literally, “gods”) for Noah, El Shaddai for Abraham, and Yahweh for Jacob. In these early times he appears to have been a very man-like god, for he talks familiarly with Abraham and Sarah, and he wrestles with Jacob. At the primitive stage of existence man seems to want a god who is very *near* to him, hence the deity is essentially anthropomorphic.

In order to understand his story the names of other gods must be examined. According to the opinion of scholars, Yahweh was Molech, with whose worship was associated the sacrifice by fire of children, and to whom Solomon built a “high place” for the use of his wives (1 *Kings* xi, 7). Molech means “King,” and “King” was one of Yahweh’s common titles. Both Yahweh and Molech appear to have been worshipped under the form of a young bull. Another of Yahweh’s titles seems to have been Baal, or Bel, who was, as has been mentioned (see pp. 74–5), a very ancient Semitic deity.

The names of some of the old Jewish gods are preserved in the various “Bethels” mentioned in the Old Testament.

Beth-el means the "house" or "dwelling-place of God,"¹ and the word appears sometimes to have been used as a name for Yahweh himself. It is not uncommon in England as a term for Nonconformist places of worship. Among the many Beth-els are "Ishum-Bethel," the house of the god Ishum, and "Bethel-Anath" (or "Bethanath"), the house of the goddess Anath. Ishum (probably the same as Ashima, mentioned in 2 *Kings*, xvii, 30) was the Babylonian god of fire and pestilence. Yahweh was also a fire-god, in which form he appeared to Moses in the burning-bush (*Exod.* iii, 2); and he was also the god of pestilence. In both attributes he is referred to by Habakkuk (iii, 5) in the lines:—

Before him went the Pestilence,
And Fiery bolts went forth at his feet.

Anath is mentioned in *Jeremiah*, a book abounding in information concerning the early worship of the Jews. In chap. xlv the burning of incense to other gods is condemned, especially (19) to the "Queen of Heaven," who was Anath, an ancient Semitic deity. In this character of Queen of Heaven she was associated with Yahweh as "Lord of Heaven." In Palestine the places named after her were Beth-Anath, Beth-Anoth, and Anathoth; and in *Jeremiah* xi, 18, it is to be noted that the inhabitants of Anathoth were among the people who sought the prophet's death.

The god Yahweh was originally a nature-god, a hill deity. He became later a tribal god, and was adopted as a "fighting god" because the tribes worshipping him were successful in fighting. That Yahweh's complete success as a fighting deity was sometimes doubtful is shown in *Judges* i, 19: "And the Lord was with Judah: and he drove out *the inhabitants of* the hill country; for he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." This doubt of the

¹ Hebrew, *Bēth*, house; *Ēl*, god.

god's fighting quality finds an echo in the Christian *Book of Common Prayer*, wherein the priest says "Give peace in our time, O Lord," and the people respond, with unconscious irony, "*Because* there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God." As time went on and the Jewish ideas of religion developed, Yahweh was elevated to the position of a supreme god, just as Merodach became chief of the Babylonian and Zeus of the Greek deities. The books of *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua* make Yahweh a despot ruling over the other gods: "The Lord your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords." Two great attempts were made thus to elevate him as the exclusive deity of the Jews. The first was by Josiah, when Hilkiah produced a new Book of the Law; the second coincided with the rebuilding of the Temple by Ezra after the Exile. But so persistent are old beliefs and worships that the Jews frequently "back-slided." Once his worship became the official worship of the nation, the older gods of the sacred writings were intentionally identified with him by the priests. The early Christians had, as will be seen later, no sacred books of their own, and, being originally a Jewish cult, they adopted the Old Testament. Hence Yahweh became the God of the new cult.

It is not known absolutely when the name of Yahweh first appeared, but it was probably not until the Jews were settled in Canaan. In the Old Testament it occurs 6,823 times as the proper name of the God of Israel. It is, indeed, expressly stated in *Exodus* vi, 3, that Yahweh was a late name, the verse running: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as God Almighty (*El Shaddai*); but by my name JEHOVAH I was not known to them." Speculation, however, as to the ancient name of this Jewish hill-deity is seriously hampered by its sacred nature. As is common to all primitive races, the magic of his name was so great, so awful, that it could not be pronounced without serious

risk, save on very special occasions. The third commandment (*Exod.* xx, 7) decrees "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD [i.e., Yahweh] thy God in vain." Taking the name "in vain" meant for purposes of magic—an interpretation scarcely made clear by the marginal note in the Revised Version, "for vanity or falsehood." To avoid pronouncing the dreaded word, therefore, the god was spoken of by some other term, as "the name"; more usually as *Adonai*, meaning "Lord," and sometimes written *Edona*. Now Hebrew, like all Semitic languages, originally possessed only consonants, the vowels being introduced much later. Yahweh was originally written JHVH, the J being pronounced like Y. When vowels were introduced, those of "Edona" were inserted in JHVH, so that it came to be written Jehovah, the pronunciation of which appears to have been "Yahweh."

The meaning of the name is still more wrapped in mystery. The verse, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (*Exod.* iii, 14), has been taken as showing that the interpretation of Yahweh is "I am that I am"—i.e., "He that is," or "the eternal." Colour is lent to this view by the fact that this meaning of a god's name is found in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, where "I am he who I am" is applied to a god. Further, the Egyptian symbol of life, so conspicuous among hieroglyphic inscriptions, is called *Ānkh*, meaning "he who lives." In the Persian sacred books Ahuramazda announces to Zarathustra: "I am who I am, Mazda." This interpretation of Yahweh is a fascinating one, as is the parallel between Jove and Jehovah, both of whom were hill-gods controlling the lightning. But it is speculative, and in the opinion of scholars (as summarized in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, 3322) Yahweh is "a primitive name that had long since been unintelligible."

CHAPTER VII

THE ORIGIN AND RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

§ 1. *Introduction*

THE same process of examination employed for the Old Testament has been applied with equal success to the New. It has been shown that the books upon which Christianity takes its stand are as much the result of a slow building-up process as were the Jewish scriptures, so that it is now an accepted fact that the Gospels are the result of accretion through several generations. The extraordinary number of contradictory teachings are as much a result of the compilation of documents in the New as in the Old Testament. Even the Christian priesthood, after long and unavailing opposition, is now constrained to admit this compilation, and one of the chief matters of contention among hierologists is concerned with the historicity or non-historicity of the Gospel Jesus, a question the final adjudication of which must rest with scientific historians.¹ Fortunately, history no longer consists in the copying of ancient documents of varying degrees of veracity, but has during the last hundred years or so become a science based upon rationalistic lines and resting upon the firm foundation of evolution and comparative anthropology.

One of the great obstacles to a correct (and, therefore,

¹ It is related in the Talmud that a certain Jesus ben Pandira was stoned and hanged to a tree on the eve of the Passover, in the reign of Alexander Jannæus, in the year 100 B.C. This Jesus may have served as the peg upon which to hang the whole system of Christianity. The story is, however, many centuries later, and rests upon too slender a foundation to be of sufficient importance as a basis for hypothesis.

impartial) understanding of Christianity, its origin, and the conditions which resulted in its survival, lies in the fact that it is the official creed of a large part of the ruling races of the world. Every professing Christian is willing to apply the methods of rational—i.e., scientific—criticism to the other great world religions, living and dead, but shrinks from subjecting his own creed to a like treatment. Forgetting, or not knowing, that *all* the great religions have claimed to be divinely revealed, he denies “inspiration” to every creed save that which he professes, making an exception of Judaism, upon which Christianity is founded, since not to do so would stultify the latter. Even he who is Christian in name only (a not uncommon figure in modern times) shows a similar disinclination. It is only natural that a faith should be exalted above all others by its devotees; but, unfortunately, prejudice in favour of a creed impels its adherents, when comparing it with other beliefs, to the construction of misleading hypotheses, whereby the truth is distorted and obscured. Although the members of many religions have shown tolerance towards the faiths of others, the Christians have exhibited none. They have proclaimed their own as the only one which has for its fundamental ethic love and charity, while showing little of these virtues towards those who think differently. As a matter of fact, Christianity is by no means the unique religion it has been thought to be. The ethical conceptions, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” and “Do unto others as you would they should do unto you,” were evolved, taught, and practised by man hundreds of years before Christianity was thought of; but the grotesque application which restricts the meaning of “neighbours” and “others” to those of the same creed, or even to a single sect of the innumerable sects of that creed, is apparently confined to Christianity alone. Yet, as Swift remarked, writing of the religious sects of his time, “They are only the same garments more or less embroidered.”

As Mr. J. M. Robertson has pointed out,¹ a survey of the comparative evolution of religions shows that not only do all undergo a change in spite of the special religious aversion to change, but all evolve by the same laws, the differences being invariably reducible to effects of environment. Hence the fact forced upon every man who seeks earnestly after truth is that Christianity must be subjected to the same rules as are followed in the examination of any other religion or code of ethics. It is only by a vigorous application of this principle that any satisfactory rule of conduct for humanity can be evolved.

It is necessary, therefore, to inquire into the forces which were concerned in the preparation for the appearance of Christianity and the circumstances which ensured its survival as one of the world's great faiths; in other words, to see how Christianity is a product of evolution, depending upon environment for its origin, and an adjustment to environment for its further development.

To give a detailed history of the rise and progress of Christianity would be out of place in this book, and only a brief outline will be presented. The story, which has been ably dealt with by other writers, is one long and sad recital of bloodshed and violence, greed, intolerance, and implacable hate,² which are, unfortunately, still continuing in many parts of the world. Christianity has been aptly compared to a great river upon which the modern spectator gazes with awe, forgetful of the many little springs and rills which have gone to make up its great flood of waters. A study of its history shows the justice of this comparison, but also carries with it a conviction that some of these tributary streams were veritable rivers of blood.

¹ *Pagan Christs*, p. 95.

² Three records alone suffice to show the appalling bloodshed which Christianity has brought in its train. The Spanish Conquest of Mexico and Peru, the persecution of the Albigenses, and the Crusades cost respectively twelve, one, and nine millions of lives; a total of twenty-two millions to the discredit of a message of "Love and Mercy."

§ 2. *The World in which Christianity Grew Up*

At the dawn of Christianity the civilized world was pregnant with approaching change. Like the tentacles of a gigantic octopus, the influence of the Roman world had spread nearly everywhere, so that the old nationalities were in some cases on the verge of extinction, and in others had already become extinct. Under these conditions the intellectual energy which had built up the great civilizations, including even the intellect of Rome herself, was decaying. The domination of the City of the Seven Hills was crushing out freedom, and the minds of the more cultured men were becoming narrower in consequence. The capacity for clear criticism displayed by the great minds of Greece and Rome in the earlier days was failing, with the result that philosophy was dropping back into the old mysticism at a time when, prevented from exercising its energies in government and statecraft, the only possible form of mental life was to be found in concrete religion. In this outlet the upper classes experienced at once a solace and a preoccupation, while those in humbler spheres of life eagerly seized upon such simpler religious doctrines as opportunity afforded them.

In Greece and Rome the worship of the gods was almost entirely confined to citizens of rank, the only general worship being that of the city deities. Aliens and slaves were excluded from religious exercises, since in the more private worship of the household deities they could take no part, having no *lares* and *penates* of their own. The uncultured many, the aliens and slaves, felt that they were apart from the official religion, much as the Victorian pauper must have felt when he regarded, from his bare and comfortless bench, the rich squire in his well-upholstered pew. As the latter was driven to Dissent, so his ancient prototypes longed for some cult of their own which would bring them into something approaching intimate union. This desire found vent in

a multitude of religious societies, whose chief features included sacred initiations and feasts with ritual ceremonies. The feast was usually the basis of the society; the initiation was often in the form of a baptism. To such societies, which were self-supporting and self-governing, were admitted slaves and aliens. An especial and important feature was that women (largely excluded from some of the legitimate religious ceremonies) were admitted equally with the other members. These pagan cults, looked upon with scorn and condemnation by the cultured classes, supplied to their adherents an outlet for that vague sense of mysticism and yearning after a near god that is characteristic of the vast majority of men, and which is the more inarticulate when education is lacking. To the unthinking, uneducated mass, organized religion saves the trouble of finding scientific explanations for natural phenomena, and of seeking some way out of the hopeless problems of sordid life.

Among the Jews themselves—and it must be remembered that Christianity sprang from Judaism—there was dissatisfaction. The poor realized they were excluded from the temple services, and women murmured against the civil and religious subordination in which they were kept. There were sects besides those of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The former, while holding to the law, added to their doctrine a belief in a future state not to be found in the Pentateuch. The Sadducees rejected this addition, and adhered to the pure Mosaic system. The most important of the additional sects was that of the *Essenes*, of which Jesus may have been a member, which had already existed for some generations, and whose tenets were chiefly those of asceticism. They rejected animal food and sacrifice, wine, baths, and fine garments, and practised celibacy.

Moreover, there was the long-cherished Jewish belief in the advent of a Messiah who should, shaking off the talons of the Roman eagle, once more raise the nation

to power and credit—a belief that must presently be examined in detail.

To sum up in the words of Mr. J. M. Robertson¹: “The determining political condition everywhere was the social sway of the empire, keeping all men impotent in the higher public affairs. Exclusion from public life, broadly speaking, had been the cause of the special addiction of the women, the slaves, and the unenfranchised foreigners of the Greek cities and of Rome to private cults and communions. Under the empire all the lay classes alike were excluded from public power; and new interests must be found to take the place of the old. Within the pale of the Roman ‘peace,’ those interests were summed up for the majority in athletics, the theatre, and the circus on the one hand, and on the other in the field of religious practices. Hopes of betterment and despair after vain revolt were alike fuel for the religious spirit, since the hope turned to vaticination and the despair crept for shelter to the mysteries that promised a better life beyond the grave. But the prevailing lot of men had become one of unwarlike submission; the material refinements of civilization had bred in the cities a new sensitiveness—indeed, a new neurosis; vice itself set up reactions of asceticism; and over all there brooded the pessimism of the prostrate East, the mood of men downcast, consciously the puppets of an uncontrollable earthly destiny, and wistful for a higher vision and rule.”

It was a period when everything was, as it were, in the melting-pot; when the freedom-crushing grip of the Roman Empire had so paralysed man’s higher intellectual faculties that a plunge into a dark age was almost inevitable, whatever ideal might be selected for future human guidance. It remains to be seen what cult offered the most satisfying ideal.

¹ *A Short History of Christianity*, p. 46.

§ 3. *The Cult of Mithra*

Mithraism¹ was for some centuries the most widespread religion throughout the Roman Empire. At one time it was a serious rival to Christianity, and might have ousted it from the field, but it finally fell before the rival cult for reasons which will be gathered later. Introduced into the Roman army through oriental militarism in the time of Pompey (106–48 B.C.), it spread because of its popularity with the soldiers as their special faith. It penetrated France and Germany, and even England, where its remains have been found in Cumberland, Northumberland, York, Oxford, Manchester, Chester, and London.

Mithra was an Aryan deity, and figures in the Vedas. In Brahmanism, however, he lapsed into obscurity, his place being taken by Agni, the fire-god; but in Persia he became prominent as a sun-god, and evolved with Zoroastrianism. The most ancient Mithraic lore is contained in the Zendavesta. The god underwent the usual evolution of deities before he reached his final shape. It is interesting to trace it, since it has an important bearing on the origins of Christianity. Commencing simply as the animized sun, Mithra became a spirit apart from that object of the skies, but symbolized by it. His name is derived from the Persian *Mihra*, meaning both "The Sun" and "The Friend," thus signifying love and goodwill along with his solar character—attributes very natural to that orb, so kindly to man. Finally, he appeared as the *Mediator* between Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Persian contending principles of good and evil. He thus became a Saviour, Redeemer, and Preserver; in other words, he was one of many Pagan Christs.

Originally, the Mithra cult was simple, but, like every other religion, it became overlaid with all kinds of ancient

¹ The best and most impartial account of Mithraism is to be found in Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs*, p. 281 sq. Those who would consult a larger work will find Cumont's *Mysteries of Mithra* a chief authority.

symbolism and ritual. The chief of these associations are the following. Mithra figured as a lion-headed god bearing two keys, showing Babylonian influence, since the idea of the locked entrance and exit of the firmament originated with the Babylonians. He was also the "slayer of the bull" (as portrayed in the very beautiful statuary group in the British Museum), to which many significances were attached, including that of *Taurus* in the Zodiac,¹ representing the sun passing through that sign. As the bull was also the symbol of lust and evil, his slaying was symbolical of the triumph of the god over those powers.

The worship of Mithra was carried on in caves, and it is to be noted here that caves were one of the earliest forms of temple. In the case of Mithra, this special form of temple was due to the idea that the sun retired into a cave during the night. The caves most sacred were those in the living rock, and many remains of these rock-hewn altars have been found. Mithra was, further, associated with the living rock as "The rock-born."

His worship in caves was celebrated on the first day of the week, or *Sunday*, which was from ancient times consecrated to him, and called *The Lord's Day* ("The Lord" being one of Mithra's titles), long before the Christian era. Besides this weekly worship, there were two chief Mithraic festivals—one at the winter solstice (our Christmas), the birth-day of the sun-god; the other at the vernal equinox (our Easter), representing the period of his triumph and sacrifice. Thus one attribute of Mithra was that of a vegetation- as well as a sun-god, the two being often associated. Christmas is a solar festival of unknown antiquity, which was appropriated by the early Christians because they were completely ignorant of the real time of Christ's birth. At Easter most solar and vegetation gods were worshipped, special mysteries being

¹ The Zodiac as a symbol is of immense antiquity.

introduced to represent their symbolical death, the search for and finding of their bodies, and their resurrection. In the case of Mithra a stone image was mourned, sepulchred in a rock tomb, and withdrawn as having come to life again. During the interval he was supposed to have descended into Hades (i.e., the sun was considered to travel round the underworld). These rites were by no means confined to Mithra, and their origin is lost in antiquity. The same general form of worship was followed in the cults of Osiris, Attis, Adonis, and Dionysus, all vegetation- and sun-gods, so that the rite probably originated in some universal myth.

At the initiation of those who were admitted to the cult of Mithra there was a ritual sacrament of bread and water, and also a baptism with water in which a mark was made upon the forehead ; and as the sign of the cross, which was the universal symbol of life and immortality *before Christianity began*, was particularly associated with the sun-god, it is permissible to surmise that it was the mark used.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that Mithra was rock-born, of the earth-mother, a virgin goddess ; and the Mithraic monuments show him as a new-born babe adored by shepherds, who offer him first-fruits.

The mysterious doctrines of the "Logos," or "Word," and the Trinity also come into Mithraism. The former appears in the Zendavesta, while a Catholic theologian¹ admits that Ahuramazda, Sraosha, and Mithra constitute a trinity closely analogous to that of later Christianity.

Mithraism was not confined to the Roman soldiers alone ; slaves and freed men joined it ; but, apparently, there was no recognized place in the cult for women. Moreover, it did not practise almsgiving, nor endeavour to extend itself by propaganda ; and it was too esoteric for the ignorant masses. The last four features placed

¹ E. L. Fischer, *Heidenthum und Offenbarung* (1878), p. 130.

it at an obvious disadvantage as compared with Christianity, and it became absorbed by the latter, which had not then reached the complicated and involved dogma which it later evolved. How much Christianity absorbed from Mithraism, because its features were religiously attractive, may be gathered from the above description. Indeed, so obvious was the plagiarism that the Christian "fathers" were reduced to the invention of the lame and grotesque explanation that the devil, in order to do evil to the true faith, had anticipated it by imitating the *future* Christian mysteries in Mithraism!

As a matter of fact, Christianity had a narrow escape. Mithraism was fostered and adopted by the Emperor Julian (called "The Apostate"; 331-63 C.E.); but his defeat and death at the early age of thirty-two at the hands of the Persians, the very nation with whom the cult originated, was disastrous to it. The omen probably helped largely to induce Julian's successor, Jovian, to choose Christianity.

Besides the rites, festivals, and attributes borrowed by Christianity, the latter owes also to Mithra the early Christian bishop's mitre and red-boots, together with Peter, figuring as the rock *Petra* and bearing the double keys of heaven and hell. In connection with that worthy saint, depicted in one place as denying his Lord and in another as destroying Ananias for a much more venial untruth, it may be mentioned that the cock is the symbolic bird of the sun-god, and is of frequent occurrence on Mithraic monuments. It would have been a matter for wonder had Mithra not been canonized as a saint, as was another saviour-god, the Egyptian Osiris, who appears in the calendar as "Saint Onuphrius." It is a well-known fact in comparative hierology that the gods of one religion become the demons of its successor;¹

¹ Indeed, the line between god and demon is a very uncertain one. As Borrow makes Lavengro remark to Petulengro: "Would it not be a rum thing if divine and devilish were originally one and the same word?"

occasionally it would appear that they become its saints. Osiris is not the only god who figures in the Christian list. Buddha also appears under the name of "St. Josaphet"; and Dionysus, whose rustic festival was held in October, was canonized not as one saint, but as *five*, in Saints Bacchus, Demetrius, Dionysius, Rusticus, and Eleutherius, *all* of whom were credited with being martyrs! A martyr Dionysus was, truly, but hardly in the sense of the Church. Possibly, however, Mithra was better off as St. Peter, with the keys in his keeping; while the Mithraic sacred chair—in which the Pope's predecessor, the High Priest of Mithra (called "Papa," or father), sat in the chief Mithraic temple which once occupied the Vatican Hill—is still preserved in St. Peter's as having belonged to the holy keeper of the portals of heaven!

§ 4. *The Jewish Expectation of a Messiah*

It is well known that the Jews have long cherished the advent of a Messiah who should consolidate them as a people, and, triumphing over all their adversaries, restore to them the holy city and a position of greatness among the nations. The development of this idea can be traced step by step.

In its earliest development there was no fixed doctrine of a personal Messiah. Yahweh was regarded as the divine king of Israel, and the human kings reigned as deputies only by his will and pleasure. This was the belief of the prophets, to whom the kingship of Yahweh was not simply an ideal, but an absolute reality.

With the changes which occurred in the type of religion after the Exile, scribes took the place of prophets, and the Jews felt the yoke of the foreign oppressor. The scribes were hard at work remodelling the law; but, as no religion can subsist upon the dry pabulum of law alone, the prophecies were systematized concurrently. Yahweh was still the law-giver and hope of Israel, and,

restless under alien oppression, the people looked to him to send a deliverer—a longing reflected in the newly edited scriptures.

Later, after the canonical books of the Old Testament were established, there arose a literature in which the figure of a special Messiah very gradually acquired prominence, as is seen in the books of *Daniel* and *Maccabees*.

Still later in New Testament times, the acutely-felt want of a leader who should deliver them from the Roman yoke made the Messianic craving one rather of kingship than spiritual resurrection.

Finally, during the dying struggles of Judaism as a political force, there arose a new and spiritual conception of the kingdom of Yahweh and of salvation through him, so that a saviour-god shaped itself in the person of Jesus Christ.

The conception of a Messiah was not confined to the orthodox Jews of Jerusalem, but was held also by the Samaritans. The Samaritans were by no means a Jewish sect; they started from the same point, but developed their system upon independent yet naturally parallel lines. Their only sacred book was the Pentateuch, and they adhered closely to the Levitical law, while developing theoretical doctrine. They believed in a Messiah, whom they called the "Tahēb"—i.e., "one who returns," or "one who restores." They possessed a book of Joshua in Arabic (see p. 115), which gave a history of Israel (or, rather, of the Samaritans) from the time of Joshua to the fourth century C.E., containing the mythic deeds of that hero. They had, indeed, a special Joshua cult.

This leads up to the connection between Joshua and the origin of Christianity, which is one of much greater intimacy than at first appears. It has already been pointed out that Joshua, or Jehoshua,¹ is the same as

¹ Jeho, or Yeho, is a part of the divine name.

Jesus, and that it means "Saviour." The ancient and mythical Joshua is a typical deliverer; he was probably an ancient Semitic deity, a sun-god; and in Perso-Arabian legend he is represented as the son of a mythical Miriam. It is both interesting and instructive to note here that the mothers of Jesus, Adonis, Hermes, and Buddha were respectively Mary, Myrrha, Maia, and Maya, and that these names, with Miriam, are the same—i.e., "Mary," the original meaning of which was "nurse." Further, in the Hebrew legend of the finding of the infant Moses in his ark of bulrushes the name of the Egyptian princess who found him is given as "Merris." These correspondences suggest strongly the origin of several myths from one universal root-myth.

In *Deuteronomy* xviii, 15, appears the distinct promise of a future prophet and leader: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; and unto him shall ye hearken." This passage was held by the Jews to refer to the Joshua who succeeded his myth-duplicate Moses but was applied later to the crucified Jesus.

§ 5. *Jesus as a Vegetation- and Sun-God*

It is necessary to break off here (returning to the Messiah question later) in order to discuss the possibility that the story of Jesus originated in the annual sacrifice of a vegetation-god. It is an established fact (as any reader can convince himself by consulting Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*) that the annual sacrifice of a victim, who was identified with the vegetation-god, with a view to ensuring a good crop was celebrated among many peoples; that it was, in a word, a very ancient and practically universal rite. The chief features of this custom were:—

1. The victim was originally the king, representing the god himself, and therefore deemed divine.

2. Later, the king's son acted as his vicarious sub-

stitute, and, his father being esteemed divine, he was the "son of the god."

3. He was allowed absolute and unlimited license for a variable period, was accorded royal honours, with a wife as queen, and finally led in triumphal procession to sacrifice

4. He was then put to death, usually bound to a sacred tree, in some cases with arms outstretched in the form of a cross.

5. Portions of the victim were ceremonially eaten, portions buried in the cornfields, and portions were credited with magical and healing powers.

6. After a variable period, he was supposed to come to life again—his resurrection representing the return of vegetation.

7. The ceremony usually took place at or about the vernal equinox.

8. As time went on, the victim was either chosen by lot or was brought up from birth for the purpose. Sometimes a condemned criminal was substituted. Later, as man developed a sense of humanity, animals were sacrificed; and, later still, cakes baked in the semblance of a man or animal were utilized. Finally, a sacramental feast of bread and wine took the place of the human or animal flesh.

9. As it was essential that the victim should be a willing one, he was frequently drugged, or made drunk with wine, before the sacrifice; while, to prevent an unseemly struggle likely to denote unwillingness when he was bound to the tree, his limbs were broken.

The vegetation-mysteries were celebrated in connection with many gods—Dionysus, Attis, Adonis, and others. Probably the Egyptian Osiris was originally a vegetation-god. They were annually performed, as has been pointed out (p. 125), by the Babylonians (*Sacæa*), the Greeks (*Cronia*, *Bacchanalia*), and Romans (*Saturnalia*). Vestiges of these ancient celebrations are to be found in various festivals and customs all over Europe and Asia.

An unbiased study of Sir James Frazer's highly interesting investigation of these ceremonies (in which in many cases the vegetation- and sun-gods are combined in one and the same deity) leads one to recognize, in the crucified Jesus, an annually slain vegetation-god, hung upon a sacred tree. Some of the features have been, however, borrowed from the cult of Mithra (who was, as has been noted, a solar- and vegetation-god), for reasons already given. The points of resemblance are¹:—

1. The description as divine and the "Son of God" sent as a deputy for the Father.
2. The arrayal in regal robes and the mock adoration of the Roman soldiery.
3. The triumphal procession through Jerusalem.
4. The sacramental feast.
5. The death upon the sacred tree.²
6. The drink (wine and gall, *Matt.* xxvii, 34; *Mark* xiv, 23) and leg-breaking, the latter practised only upon the thieves, because Jesus "was dead already" (*John* xix, 33).
7. The burial (in a cave, borrowed from the Mithra rite).
8. The resurrection.
9. The representation of the whole events of the Gospels as occupying one year.
10. The sacrifice at or about the vernal equinox.

The Roman Saturnalia must have been well known to the Jews, since it was celebrated by the Roman soldiery wherever they were stationed. They knew also, in earlier times, the Babylonian Sacæa (upon which their own Feast of Purim and their story of Esther were probably founded), and later Greek influence must have familiarized them

¹ Only an outline is given here, several details having been omitted; but as many of the most striking and prominent points as are consistent with the exigencies of space have been supplied.

² The methods of crucifixion used by the Romans were two:—(1) The victim was bound to an upright post or tree. (2) He was bound to two beams, the arms being twisted back, behind the cross beam. The victims were bound with cords, and *not nailed*. Nailed crucifixions were of Buddhist origin.

with the Bacchanalia. It is, therefore, a plausible hypothesis that the Christ story arose in one of these annual vegetation-god celebrations, and that on this occasion the victim was named Jesus. As Mr. Robertson has pointed out,¹ "it may be that the roots of the historic Christian cult go back to an immemorial Semitic antiquity, when already the name of Jesus was divine. In the shadow of that name its origins are hidden."

§ 6. *Jesus as the Messiah*

It may be assumed with considerable plausibility that a man named Jesus, sacrificed as a vegetation-god, happened to correspond also to the Jewish conception of the looked-for Messiah. That Jesus and Joshua² are identical names would alone supply a considerable qualification for a Messiah, and the execution on the eve of the Passover would give the name for some Jews a mystic significance, especially as it was a tradition among them that the Messiah would come at midnight of the day of the Passover.

Mr. Robertson has traced with an able and vigorous pen, in various works upon the subject, the connection between Jesus and the expected Messiah. He points out that in the very earliest form Christianity was nothing more or less than a phase of Judaism, the creed of a section of Jews and Jewish proselytes who saw in Jesus the hoped-for Messiah—one executed in such a manner as to constitute an atoning sacrifice. The conception of atonement by sacrifice had been a Semitic tenet for ages, and was accepted by the Babylonians. These early Jewish devotees held primitive ceremonial feasts upon the lines of the Greco-Roman religious banquets, sacrificial repasts

¹ *A Short History of Christianity*, p. 12.

² It is to be noted that in *Jude*, 5, the reading "Jesus" (= Joshua) in place of "the Lord," offered in the marginal note of the Revised Version, alone can make the verse intelligible. The Joshua of *Zechariah* iii, 1-8, and vi, 11-15, is also a Jesus.

derived originally from ancient tribal ceremonies. The Jewish idea of a Messiah included that of one who should suffer and die ; but such a Messiah who died and did not return triumphant was not likely to obtain any place in their system. The world was used to the domination of a Roman Emperor who was supposed to be divine. "Against such divine pretensions on the part of the Roman conqueror the Jews would instinctively develop their own formulated hope of a Jewish Messiah ; and wherever in the Empire men revolted against the apotheosis of the earthly autocrat, the Judæo-Gentile cult of the slain and re-arising Christ, who was soon to come and judge the world, would find devotees eager to accord to him the attributes claimed by Cæsar, and whatever others might avail. The new religion was thus in every aspect a syncretism of the religious material of the time."¹

Thus, in the Gospels Jesus appears generally as a Jewish Messiah, to reappear shortly as the judge of living and dead at the imminent catastrophe of the end of the world. Such a Messiah must be of the ancient Royal Line of David, born at Bethlehem ; but another tradition required him to be also a descendant of Joseph. Jesus was, therefore, made to be of the House of David, descended, by the way, through Bathsheba, the wife his royal ancestor stole from his devoted General Uriah (*Matt.* i, 1-16) ; and of the House of Joseph by his putative father, the husband of his virgin mother.

It can thus be seen that the earliest form of Christianity was essentially Jewish, and it can be realized that, when the expectation of the return of the sacrificed Jesus as a triumphing Messiah did not materialize, the cult lost prestige in disappointed Jewry, and had to seek support beyond that nation among the Gentiles. The awful catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem before the conquering

¹ J. M. Robertson, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

arm of the Emperor Titus, in 70 c.e., with the holocaust of Jewish zealots thereby involved, made possible the rise of Christianity as a separate, Gentile faith.

§ 7. *Possible Origin in a Mystery Drama*

Mystery dramas—i.e., dramatic representations of the central episodes of the stories of suffering deities—played a very important part in the great religions of the ancient world; dramatic ritual, indeed, was naturally prior to written legend. It cannot be doubted that our mediæval mystery and morality plays were the descendants of such representations. In Egypt, the story of Osiris and Isis was shown with images of the gods carried in procession. In Greece and the Greek-speaking parts of Asia there were dramatic representations of the stories of Adonis, Attis, Herakles, Dêmêter and Persephonê, and Dionysus; and in the last-named a turning-of-water-into-wine miracle was regularly performed in the Eleusinian mysteries. In the cult of Mithra similar dramatic performances took place. The Hindus also had their mystery dramas.

Such shows were popular and, doubtless, of considerable utility in bringing home vividly to the illiterate mass of the populace the essential themes of the religion of the country. In mediæval times the Christian Church had its mystery plays, and sporadic performances have survived to modern times in the famous Passion Play of Ober Ammergau. Another such representation, attended with alarming results, was performed in Mexico in 1903. In Europe the appeal of the mystery-drama to the primitive dramatic instinct of the rustic mind survives in Harvest celebrations and Christmas mumming, both fast disappearing.

It is an interesting and significant fact that all these ancient mystery-dramas have been specially concerned with sun and vegetation deities—that is to say, with slain

saviour-gods, whose annual sacrifice and resurrection ensured the saving of mankind by the recurrence of successful food crops and vintages. Originally a real sacrifice of a human representative, part sacramentally eaten and part buried (or the blood mixed with the seed corn¹), they came, by evolution, to be symbolically performed. The story of Wayland Smith, as told by Kipling in *Puck of Pook's Hill*, is an interesting illustration of this evolution from the actual to the symbolic. There Puck describes to the children how he had seen the arrival in England of the North god Weland and his worship with the real sacrifice of men and horses; and how, later, its place was taken by the pretended killing of a man and the burning upon Weland's altars of some hair cut from the mane and tail of a horse. The study of ancient and savage rituals shows the progress of this evolution. These mystery-dramas were, therefore, symbolic modifications of an original rite of human sacrifice. The development of such representations was fostered as strengthening the position of the priestly class. The Mass is itself derived from such a mystery-drama, the word "Host" being derived from the Latin *Hostia*, a sacrifice.

Such symbolic representations must have been well known to the Jews, especially in the case of the Greek mysteries. There were theatres at Damascus, Jericho, and Gadara. Possibly the less orthodox Jews may themselves have revived some ancient Joshua rite in times of national disaster—a practice known to have occurred with other peoples. In such survivals the tendency was often to reinstate a ritual in its more primitive form.

Mr. Robertson² has pointed out that the story of the Last Supper, Entry into Jerusalem, Agony, Betrayal,

¹ In connection with this sanctifying with blood it is important to know that our word "bless" comes from the Anglo-Saxon *blēdsian*, to "redden with blood."

² *Pagan Christs*, p. xi; and *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 359 sq.

Crucifixion, and Resurrection—all possess the essential characters of the mystery-drama of a vegetation- and solar-god, having its close parallels in the features of other such cults; and he contends that the narrative first assuming Christian shape in a Jewish mystery-play is the only satisfactory view of its origin. For his full and able argument, with its great wealth of detail, the reader is referred to his works as cited.¹ It may, however, be mentioned, out of many points, that the Transfiguration on the mountain represents the shining sun-god grouped with Moses and Elias, both equally solar figures known to Jewish religionists, and that the introduction of Judas (really *Judaïos*—i.e., “the Jew”) was a later Gentile invention traducing the Jews.

§ 8. *Reasons for the Survival of Christianity*

In the preceding paragraphs we have endeavoured to show how Christianity came into existence when the state of men's minds made the time ripe for a new religion. Humanity had grown tired of the old faiths, under which they had not found life much easier or much better. Among the Jews there was an increased longing for a Messiah who should come in triumph and overthrow the hated domination of the Romans—a desire of which Christianity seemed to promise the fulfilment. To the Gentiles the new cult appeared to offer a change in the generally unsatisfactory state of things—a promise that, when one considers the many abuses and the hard conditions of the poor to-day, does not seem to have been fulfilled. Indeed, the richer the Church grew, the less anti-civic it became.

Christianity began among the illiterate, and Jesus does not appear to have at first been regarded as a god: in the earliest writings he was described merely as Yahweh's “holy servant.” This is in accordance with evolution in

¹ See Bibliography.

other creeds, wherein a fabulous hero becomes first an actual man, then a demi-god, and ends as the highest god. The early Christians had no scriptures save those of the Old Testament; the later elaborate manuscripts were devised to support the new faith. Exactly how this faith began it is difficult to say with precision. During the first hundred years after the supposed date of the crucifixion, the writings of the time tell merely of a growing cult founded round a crucified saviour faith in whom ensured salvation, but "with a theology not yet coherently dogmatic."¹ It has been seen how this saviour-god answered closely to the ancient conception of a vegetation sun-god.

The earliest traces of Christianity may have begun in the sect at Jerusalem of the "Ebionites," so named from the Hebrew *Ebionim*, signifying "the poor." These appear to have been either of Samaritan origin or the descendants of an old Jewish element which, from the time of Ezra, had rejected the later Old Testament writings.

Later there existed another sect called "Nazarites," or "Nazaræans" (Greek *Nazaraioi*), mentioned in *Acts* xxiv, 5. The name of this sect has been considered to have been derived from the place Nazareth, but is more likely to have come from the word *netzer*, a "branch," used in the passages, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit" (*Isaiah* xi, 1), and "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a branch" (*Matt.* ii, 23). In *Zechariah* vi, 11, a Joshua (= Jesus) is spoken of as "the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD." The Nazarite sect, therefore, was probably connected with the Messianic idea; and the description of Jesus as the "Nazarene" or

¹ J. M. Robertson, *A Short History of Christianity*, p. 3.

the "Nazarite" implied, not that he was of Nazareth, but that he was to the Jews the expected "branch."

In whatever way Christianity originated, it failed completely among the Jews, the first people with whom it arose. They expected a Messiah whose triumphant return would establish for them an earthly rather than a spiritual kingdom, and to those only who had reached to the conception of a heavenly kingdom could the new cult have given satisfaction.

Among the Gentiles, Christianity survived for three very cogent reasons:—

1. It supplied a want.
2. It was well organized.
3. It was adaptable.

1. It supplied a *want* among the lower classes—slaves, freed men, and women. Even men of bad principles and reputation were admitted, provided they would "repent." It was the creed for the poor, although for the poor it does not, during its nineteen hundred years, appear to have accomplished much. To these it preached a saviour-god, a sort of rough communism, and the speedy approach of the end of the world. It promised to show to the faithful the way to a future life, with a material heaven in the shape of the New Jerusalem.

Of course, Christianity was bound also to offer, like the other cults, attractions in this worldly life in the form of ceremonial worship and sacramental feasts. The latter in their primitive form had to be kept within decorous bounds, and this was accomplished by appeals to the inclination for asceticism which was growing in the East.

The end-of-the-world idea was very useful, since it induced the deluded faithful to part with heavy donations, and enabled the Church to make it compulsory for the baptized to take the sacrament and to hold over the heads of its members the threat of withholding that privilege, thereby entailing the awful penalty of the loss of salvation.

The Church thus had superstition, the child of ignorance and fear, working for it. The doctrine of the speedy end of the world lasted some years, but failed ultimately for want of fulfilment. It was used to its utmost in the year 1000 C.E., to the great enrichment of the Church and the serious misery of mankind.

2. Its *organization* was well adapted to spread the faith. This required propagandists, a written doctrine, and a well-organized Church, all of which were forthcoming as time went on. The old pagan cults were decaying; they did not proselytize, they were weakening in organization, and their revenues were diminishing. Paganism could not readjust itself to altered circumstances, was deprived of its resources, and disappeared before the younger and more virile cult, which appropriated its most attractive features. It was a matter of evolution. Christianity flourished as a system, first because it attracted the dissatisfied, craving for a simpler faith; later, when it became established, because the Church acquired the power to receive unlimited donations and legacies, and was debarred from parting with its property. What is so lamentable is that, having gained power as a firmly-established cult, it was unable to return to its primitive ideal and strip itself of its borrowed pagan plumage, but survived as "an idolatrous polytheism," with its host of lesser deities in the shape of angels and saints, many of them the dispossessed gods of older cults. It became, in point of fact, a mere neo-paganism grafted on to Judaism. It is this development from which the Christian Church is suffering to-day. The true facts of the manner of its building have been hidden for generations from the great mass outside its priesthood, until now that mass is becoming alive to the deception. And with the necessity for coping with this awakening the Church has lost its adaptability. In the words of Mr. Robertson¹: "It has

¹ *A Short History of Christianity*, p. 279.

been said with broad truth that whereas Greece, with her dialectic discipline, exhorted men to make their beliefs agree with one another, and the Christian Church ordered them to make their beliefs agree with her dogma, the modern spirit demands that beliefs should agree with facts."

3. Early Christianity was eminently *adaptable*, whereby it absorbed the most attractive parts of the old cults. It appealed to the masses, who, being primitive, could not be weaned in a hurry from ancient beliefs and superstitions, and were therefore obliged to adopt pagan worship. It has already been seen how much Christianity took from Mithraism; what other pagan features it absorbed will be enumerated in the next section.

Finally, from political motives, the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the State religion in 312 C.E. The career of this Imperial convert—whose life, whitewashed by grateful Christian historians, was stained with the blackest crime and murder—appears to have been worse rather than better after his conversion. For years party strife and hair-splitting squabbles over dogmas had become a serious menace to the survival of the faith, and Constantine saved Christianity from itself.

The Emperor Julian, a ruler whose mind was of a high order, endeavoured to reinstate Paganism in 361 C.E., but he held full power for but twenty months, and fell, as has been already narrated, in 363, in circumstances which led to the re-establishment of Christianity by Jovian. The faith had a narrow escape.

§ 9. *What Christianity Absorbed from Other Sources*

The Christian system is not the work of one generation, but of many generations; a patchwork formed by piecing together the most attractive fragments of pagan art and ritual. The comparative study of early religions and primitive savage ideas forces upon the unprejudiced mind the conclusion that Christianity began with the adaptation

of a previous myth, in all probability that vegetation-god cult which forms the germ of universal historic religion. If Jesus was indeed historical, his personality has become so enshrouded in the extraordinary web of myth material that has been woven around him as to be indistinguishable from the other saviour-gods that have, through the ages, attracted man's religious sense and love of the mysterious. Many cults have been built up from the same fabulous material.

It is impossible in an outline to give a complete list of all the points which Christianity has assimilated from Paganism and Judaism; some of them have already been dealt with in this chapter, but the following are the most important. They are best discussed under the three headings of Attributes and Titles, Life Incidents, and Teachings.

A.—ATTRIBUTES AND TITLES

1. *Alpha and Omega*.—This is specially referred to in *Revelation*: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, said the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come" (i, 8). "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (xxi, 6). "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (xxii, 13). It is a very ancient pagan formula. In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* occurs: "I am Yesterday, To-day, and To-morrow"; while in *Pausanias* (x, 12) is written "Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be," and in Plato's *Laws* (iv, 7) "God the beginning and the end."

2. *Christ*.—The Greek form of the Messianic name was *Chrēstos*, meaning "good, excellent, gracious, kind," and it occurs frequently in the New Testament. Thus, the word is used in *Luke* vi, 35, "For he is kind towards the unthankful and the evil"; and in 1 *Peter* ii, 3, "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The same special title was applied to the gods of the Samothracian mysteries—to Osiris, Isis, and Hermes.

The word is also used in the form *Chreistos*, meaning "the Anointed," and, spelt in that form, was frequently used by the Christians in the second and third centuries.

3. *Saviour*.—This title is essentially that of a sacrificed mediator, and was a common one in many religious systems. In Egypt it was a title of Osiris, among the Jews of Yahweh. The Greeks applied it to Zeus, Helios, Artemis, Dionysus, Herakles, the Dioscuri, Cybêlê, and Æsculapius.

4. The *Logos* or *Word*.—Philo of Alexandria, a learned Jew who lived 20 B.C. to 60 C.E., suggested that the "logos," or "word," meaning "reason," expressed the idea of God. It is essentially an ancient conception, was applied to Thoth, Hermes, and Mithra, and was well known and accepted in Jewish theology. In China the doctrine of an all-pervading Reason was postulated by Lao-Tsze in the sixth century B.C.

5. The *Lamb*.—As is well known, the central feature of the Passover was the eating of a lamb, slain as an expiatory sacrifice. The conception was ancient, and is traceable to the Chaldæans. It was symbolical of the sun-god passing through the zodiacal sign of Aries; and the lamb was, therefore, adopted in solar cults. The increasing power of the sun after the vernal equinox was ascribed to the influence of the sign Aries, through which it had passed, so that the Lamb became the symbol of the risen saviour and of his passage from the underworld into the height of heaven.¹ Two thousand years later than the Chaldæan period the sign through which, owing to the precession of the Equinoxes, the sun passed was that of Taurus the Bull. Hence, in the Persian worship of Mithra, the symbol of the sun-god was the Bull, and one of Mithra's titles was "The Slayer of the Bull." About the beginning of the Christian era the sun began to pass through Pisces (the fishes) at the Spring Equinox; hence

¹ Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, p. 39.

the fish also became a Christian symbol of the saviour-god.

Jesus is frequently figured as the *Good Shepherd*, carrying the lamb upon his shoulders. This is an echo of the portrayal in ancient art of Hermes carrying a ram ; it is an instance of a myth of the class designed to explain some pagan sculpture, or dramatic or other representation. In this connection it may be pointed out that in the very ancient and primitive Greek cult of Orpheus its carvings, representing him as a "good shepherd" and a "fisher of men," were adopted by the earliest Christians.¹

6. The *Trinity*.—The conception of a triune god, or trinity, is of very ancient origin, as the following list² will show :—

Babylonian.—An (Lord of Heaven), Bel (Lord of Earth), Ea (Lord of the Underworld).

Egyptian.—Osiris (Father), Isis (Mother), Horus (Son).

Greek.—1. Zeus (God of Heaven), Poseidon (God of Ocean), Hades (God of the Underworld). 2. Zeus, Athênê (Goddess of Wisdom), Apollo (Sun-god).

Hindu and Vedic.—1. Brahma (Creator), Vishnu (Preserver), Siva (Destroyer). 2. Indra (Sky-god), Sueya (Sun-god), Agni (Fire-god).

Roman.—Jupiter (Lord of Heaven), Juno (Queen of Heaven), Minerva (Goddess of Wisdom).

Scandinavian.—Odin (All-father), Thor (Thunder-god), Loki (God of Evil).

The Christian Trinity was taken from the Trinity of the Egyptians, and was originally Father, Mother, and Son ; but, the growing ascetic tendency being strongly adverse to the inclusion of a woman in the celestial triad, the mother (than whom can be no more beautiful idea) was dismissed in favour of the Holy Ghost. This intangible member of the Trinity, the "wind" of *Acts* ii, 2, over

¹ Sir E. Ray Lankester, *Diversions of a Naturalist* (Methuen ; 1919), p. 355.

² E. Clodd, *The Childhood of the World*, p. 180.

the conception of which no little blood has been shed, is based upon the primitive belief, already referred to (p. 31), that the breath of man was the spirit or essence of life. The word "spirit" is derived from the Latin *spiro* (I breathe), and the rapid evaporation—whereby they "resolved into thin air"—of certain fluids was the cause of their being called "spirits."

B.—LIFE INCIDENTS

1. The story of the *Birth* of Jesus contains several elements of pagan myth, two of which have already received notice in reference to the birth of Mithra (p. 141) and the name of Mary (p. 145).

Birth in a stable occurs with several gods: Horus was born in the stable-temple-cave of the sacred cow; Krishna, Hermes, and Herakles were all brought up among cattle. [In the cases of Horus, Zeus, Dionysus, Adonis, Hermes, and Mithra—all sun-gods—the birth-place was essentially a cave. Probably the stable motive was fundamentally an astronomical or zodiacal adaptation.

Birth while travelling (*Luke* ii, 1-7) reflects the journey made by Isis before the birth of Horus; and the cases of Latona and Apollo, Maya and Buddha, Coronis and Æsculapius, in which a god-child was born during a journey, may also be cited. The flight into Egypt (*Matt.* ii, 13-6) is a variant of the same myth.

In connection with this point it is to be noted that Herod was Governor of Judæa in 40 B.C., and died six years before the reputed birth of Jesus; he was not in Jerusalem at all after 6 B.C. Quirinius (or Cyrenius) is spoken of in *Luke* ii, 2, as Governor of Syria in the time of Augustus. As a matter of fact, he was pro-consul of Syria from 5 to 14 C.E., and Augustus died in the year 5 C.E. The discrepancy is obvious.

The myth of virgin-birth is not found in the original versions of the second and fourth gospels, nor in any writing of the Pauline epistles. It is, however, a very

common myth-motive. Among the virgin-born gods were: Perseus, of Danaë; Attis, of Myrrha; Adonis, of Myrrha; Horus, of Isis; Buddha, of Maya; and the Mexican Huitzilopochtli, of Coatlicue. Juno (Hera), the wife of Jupiter (Zeus), was thought to become a virgin again each year, and as a virgin she bore Vulcan (Hephæstus), Cybêlê, Leto, and Dêmêter.

The idea of virgin-birth is very ancient. It probably arose in the mysterious nature of generation, and anthropological research has shown that it is a very common belief among primitive races that conception is due to the entry of a spirit into the mother, and has nothing to do with sexual relations.

2. *Baptism*.—It has already been seen that baptism with water was an initiation ceremony in the cult of Mithra. That it was pre-Christian is shown in the Gospels by the introduction of John the Baptist. It was, in fact, a common Gentile usage. In Christianity it was adopted as a substitute for circumcision, and was at first celebrated only twice a year, the candidate being obliged to undergo a long preparation. The earlier ceremony was much more complicated than it afterwards became. Commencing with the exorcism of evil spirits, followed by the recital of a creed, the candidate was immersed in water, signed with the mark of the cross, and prayed over. He then partook of milk and honey, and was finally arrayed in a white robe and crown. In the early days of Christianity baptism was postponed as long as possible, under the very comfortable assumption that the water washed away all sin. Such was the case with Constantine, whose list of crimes requiring expiation was a very heavy one, and must have imposed an arduous task upon the cleansing element.

Baptism of some kind or another was a ritual of many pagan cults. The restless movements of water and the way in which running water cast down its impurities early originated the primitive idea that it was a powerful

spirit, a conception utilized as a means of removing evil things. Another common form of baptism was by blood, and it has already been seen that the idea of blessing is connected with the application of that fluid. There were many forms of this blood rite in initiation; and special mention must be made of the *Taurobolia* and *Criobolia*, which were celebrated among the Romans. In these ceremonies the initiate was placed in a pit covered by a grating, so that he was drenched with the blood of the bull, ram, or lamb slain upon it over his head. The rite was supposed to ensure resurrection and eternal life, and is the direct origin of the phrase, "Washed in the blood of the lamb."¹

3. The *Massacre of the Innocents* is a detail of the universal myth of the attempted slaying of the child sun-god, the disappearance of the stars as they pale with morning light that heralds the rising sun suggesting a massacre from which the new-born sun-god escapes. Similar applications of the myth occur with Romulus and Remus, Æsculapius, Herakles, Attis, Cybêlê, and Moses.

4. The *Disciples*.—An examination of the Gospels shows a remarkable lack of foundation for the existence of the twelve disciples. Of so important a question as their appointment or calling one would expect a precise account; but there are circumstantial yet irreconcilable allusions in the case of four or five only, as in *Matt.* iv, 18–22. In one of the Pauline epistles the three chief apostles are spoken of, but there is no mention of the twelve. In 1 *Corinthians* the only allusion to that number is an interpolation. It is true that the names of the twelve are found in the Gospels (as in *Matt.* x, 1–5, and *Luke* vi, 13–16), but they are not in the early records, having been added later.

¹ *Taurobolio criobolique in æternum renatus*—"By the bull-sacrifice and the ram-sacrifice born again for eternity"—is the inscription upon a tomb.

It has been suggested that the twelve disciples or attendants form an attribute of a sun-god and are the signs of the Zodiac. There are some grounds for the hypothesis; but there is another explanation in the fact that the Jewish High-priest, in the later days of the Temple, employed certain "Apostles" as collectors of tribute and supervisors of the scattered faithful, as there were Jews living in many lands. The number twelve was in accordance with Jewish custom, one for each of the twelve tribes. Later, as the numbers of dispersed Jews increased after the fall of the Temple, seventy-two collectors, answering to the traditional number of "the nations" in Jewish lore, were appointed under the twelve. These form the basis for "the seventy" ("seventy and two" in the marginal note of the Revised Version) mentioned in *Luke* x, 1. At this time the twelve acted chiefly as regulators and teachers, and their precepts were embodied in the *Didaché*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. This book, a purely Jewish manual, reflects the morality and simple piety of a Jewish sect. It was used largely by the Christian writers in compiling the Jesuine teachings in the Gospels, and interpolations were made in it to bring it into conformity with the latter.




5. *The Temptation* is an adaptation from a very old myth, originating in the representation of the Babylonian goat-god standing on a mountain beside the sun-god, and symbolizing the sun in Capricorn (one of the signs of the Zodiac). This was turned by the Greeks into the well-known myths of Pan leading Zeus to the mountain-top, of Pan or Marsyas competing with Apollo, and of Silenus instructing Dionysus.

It is convenient here to mention that the conception of a personal Devil is taken from the Persian Ahriman (the principle of evil) or from the Babylonian goat-god, through the Greek Pan. The Hebrew Azazel was a variant of the goat-god. Pan, equipped, like his Satanic majesty, with horns, hoofs, and tail complete, had already

developed a formidable and fearsome side to the pagan world, and was supposed to lurk in woods and mountains with his attendant satyrs. Silenus was a variant of Pan.

The angels of the Christian system, the worship of which began to flourish among the Catholics of the sixth century, came partly from the adoption of minor pagan deities, partly from the idea of messengers employed by gods. Some of the chief angels were borrowed by the Jews from the Babylonians and Persians during and after the Exile.

6. *The Crucifixion and the Cross*.—It has already been pointed out that the tree upon which the Romans executed delinquents was not of that form which is so venerated by Christians. It was either a simple, upright post or two beams arranged after the fashion of the Greek letter *tau*—**T**.

The sign of the cross is one of great antiquity as a solar symbol, and occurs in many ancient sculptures. To mention a few instances: it occurs in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing as , and as the *ankh*, or *crux ansata* , the hieroglyph for immortal life. In the latter form it is frequently seen in the hands of the Egyptian gods; often, in funeral sculptures, being held up to the mouth of the representation of the deceased. Another Egyptian cross hieroglyph was the sign , meaning "goodness." In the Egyptian ritual of Osiris a spreading of the arms on the cross was in remote antiquity a form of mystic regeneration; and in some amulets the *stauros*, or true cross of Osiris, is depicted with human arms. On the breast of a mummy in the London University Museum is a **T** cross upon a mound, or "calvary."

The sign was well known to the Jews, and was the mark of a body of religious enthusiasts in early Jewish times (*Ezekiel* ix, 4). In the Apocalypse (*Revelation*), which is mainly a Jewish document, it is indicated by the expression, "seal of the living God" (vii, 2-3).

The crucifix did not appear in Christian art until about

the seventh century, but there is an ancient Asiatic crucifix representing Krishna, who was a saviour-god.¹

Among other saviour-gods who were "crucified," or bound or hung upon a tree, were Osiris and Horus. Prometheus (who was credited by the Greeks with the inestimable gift of fire to man) was nailed with chains, with arms extended, to the rocks of Mount Caucasus, and his tragedy was acted in Athens five hundred years B.C. Such gods were sacrificed, as has been seen, to ensure good crops, as "messengers" to the god, and it was a Perso-Scythian usage in slaying such a "messenger" to flay him and stuff the skin with outstretched arms. "Thus the historic form of the crucifix was determined, not by the form of normal crucifixion (for in that the arms were drawn above the head and not outspread), but by previous symbolism."²

The "fathers" of the Christian Church were fully aware of the existence of the cross as a sacred emblem in early religions, and accounted for this in the usual way by the assertion that the Devil "anticipated" Christianity.

7. The *Descent into Hell* is a reflection of the primitive conception of the sun's passage through the under-world. It occurs in the myths of the Egyptian Osiris; the Greek Herakles, Dionysus, Hermes, Adonis, Dêmêter, Orpheus, and Ulysses; the Persian Mithra; and the Scandinavian Balder.

8. The *Seamless Robe* is represented in pagan myth by the indivisible robe—the "robe of light"—of Osiris, and by the seamless chiton woven by Spartan women for Apollo.

9. The *Miracles* of Jesus have their prototypes in the cults of other gods. Thus Dionysus turned water into wine, and the transformation formed a prominent part of the mysteries celebrated in his honour;³ like Jesus, he

¹ This is figured in Dr. Hardwicke's *Evolution of Man*, p. 218.

² J. M. Robertson, *Short History of Christianity*, p. 27.

³ Dionysus also rode to the temple of Dodona on two asses—a myth recalled by the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

was also known as "the true vine." Further, he miraculously fed his followers in the desert, as Jesus fed the five thousand and Moses fed the Israelites in the wilderness with quails and manna.

Poseidon walked upon the water, and Æsculapius restored sight to the blind.

C.—THE TEACHINGS

Great stress has always been laid upon the sublimity and simplicity of the teachings of Jesus. They do not, however, contain one item that is original. The ethics of the Gospels are, in fact, substantially Jewish, and the relation of Judaism to Christianity is that of a mother country to a colony. As has often happened in political history, the colony rebelled successfully. Such teachings as cannot be paralleled in the Jewish writings are to be found in the pre-Christian literature of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and India. The protestations put in the mouth of the soul of the ancient Egyptian when justifying himself before Osiris, the Great Judge of the Dead, are equal to any Christian ethic. "I have given bread to him that was hungry," he says, "water to him that was thirsty, clothes to the naked, and shelter to the wanderer"; and among these protestations there can be none more sublime than the assertion: "I have made no man weep."

In primitive god-making it is the saviour-god who comes first; the teaching-god is secondary, a necessary satisfying of the human craving for guidance. Every religion has had its teaching-gods; even the primitive Narrinyeri of South Australia have their Nurundere, who is supposed to have instructed them in their ceremonies. To name a few of the teaching-gods of antiquity: there were Oannes, the fish-god, who taught the Babylonians everything pertaining to civilization; Thoth, who taught the Egyptians language, names, and writing; Osiris, who instructed them in agriculture and bestowed laws; with

Janus, Saturn, Dêmêter, Athênê, Cybêlê, Odin, and the Mexican Huitzilopochtli, who were all teaching-gods.

It is a significant fact that in the Pauline writings, which are enthusiastic for the Christ principle rather than the Jesus principle, the Jesuine teachings are never once cited : a remarkable circumstance if these teachings were circulated in Paul's day. The Pauline writings are equally silent as regards any biographical details of Jesus. This fact, together with the knowledge that all the teachings of Jesus can be traced to other and more ancient sources, is sufficient to make it evident that they were added to the Christian scriptures late. There are additional arguments in favour of this conclusion, for which the reader is referred to the works mentioned in the Bibliography. As will be seen in the next chapter, the books of the New Testament are as much the result of gradual compilation as are those of the Old Testament. In the latter is enshrined the history of a people ; in the New Testament, that of a faith. The result is that, "broadly speaking, the age of an early Christian document is found to be in the ratio of its narrative bareness, its lack of biographical myth, its want of relation to the existing Gospels."¹ The men who frame supposed sacred documents may be deliberately fraudulent, but the majority are doubtless well-meaning and devoted ; both delude themselves as to the ultimate result of their labours, since their fabrications are exposed by the tribunal of rational criticism.

The following three examples of the teachings of Jesus have been selected to illustrate the foregoing remarks :—

1. The *Lord's Prayer* is entirely pre-Christian, its sentences being derived from the Talmud, Old Testament books, and Apocrypha. The Jews had a prayer called the *Kadish*, founded upon a Babylonian prayer or incan-

¹ J. M. Robertson, *Short History of Christianity*, p. 5.

tation to Merodach, possibly copied and altered by Ezra. The *Kadish* runs:—

“Our father who art in heaven, be gracious to us, O Lord our God.

“Hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above, and upon earth here below.

“Let thy Kingdom reign over us, now and ever.

“The holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against me;

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing;

“For thine is the Kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory, for ever and ever more.”

The following are some of the sentences from the Jewish writings which are parallel to the Lord's Prayer:—

“Blessed be God every day for the daily bread which he giveth us” (*Talmud*).

“Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest” (*Ecclesiasticus* xxiii, 23-4).

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is *thine*; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 *Chron.* xxix, 11).

2. “*Come unto Me.*”—In *Matt.* xi, 28-30, are the words: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” The lines follow a prayer, beginning “I thank thee, O Father,” without apparent break, in such a manner as to be unintelligible. It has a suggestion of *Isaiah* lv, 1-3: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.....Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.”

It also recalls the formula in the Mithra mysteries: "Be of good courage, Mystæ; ye have been instructed of the God: and ye shall have salvation from your sorrows"; as well as the ritual in the mysteries of Isis, in which the goddess says: "I am compassionate of thy woes: I come, helpful and propitious. Cease from tears and make an end of lamentations; put away despair: now doth my providence cause to shine the salutary day." Later, the priest tells the believer to wear a joyous countenance, and to bear willingly the *yoke* of his new ministry.

3. The *Sermon on the Mount* (according to *Matt.* v-vii; it is described as delivered on a plain in *Luke* vi, 17) is a collection of wise sayings. They are recorded in a very disconnected manner, and show nothing of the character of a sermon or discourse. Nearly all these sayings are pre-Christian, and are to be found in the Talmud, the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or the Teachings of the Twelve Apostles ("Didachó"). A few examples may be quoted in illustration:—

Matthew, ch. v-vii

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v, 3).

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (v, 8).

"Every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in

Parallel texts

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he saved me" (*Psalm* cxvi, 6).

"Mysteries are revealed unto the meek.....The Lordis honoured of the lowly" (*Ecclesiasticus* iii, 19-20).

"He that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour" (*Prov.* xxix, 23).

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?.....He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (*Psalm* xxiv, 3, 4).

"He who causes his brother publicly to blush shall have no part in the future life" (*Talmud*).

"Rabbi Chiskias said, Who-

danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (v, 22).

"Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (v, 39).

"And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do" (vi, 7).

soever calleth his neighbour *resho*, wicked, he is thrust into hell" (Sohar., *Exod.*, fol. 50, col. 299).

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart" (*Lev.* xix, 17).

"Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him" (*Lament.* iii, 30).

"If thy comrade call thee an ass, put on the pack-saddle" (*Talmud*).

"If any one give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect" (*Didaché*, chap. i).

"Let the words of a man always be few before the face of God" (*Talmud*).

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that the frequent "parables" in which Jesus is represented as indulging are obscure and can scarcely be considered as "teachings"; indeed, in *Matt.* xiii, 10, and onwards, their uselessness as such is demonstrated: "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." In verse 36 the disciples themselves are obliged to ask that the parables may be explained, although in verse 11 it is said that "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

§ 1. *Introduction*

THE books which form the New Testament number twenty-seven, and for purposes of consideration they may be divided into three groups:—

1. *Historical*.—The four Gospels—*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*; *The Acts of the Apostles*.

2. *Teaching*.—The epistles attributed to Paul and other apostles, viz.:—*Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude*.

3. *Prophecy*.—The *Apocalypse*,¹ or *Revelation*, attributed to St. John.

Before discussing these books it is necessary to refer briefly to contemporary Roman literature, and especially to the Jewish writings of the time, in order that some idea may be gained as to the knowledge shown of the Christians in the former, and to realize that, from the many parallels to be found in the New Testament books, their writers were well acquainted with the literature of the Jews apart from the Old Testament.

Mr. F. J. Gould² points out that the following well-known writers of the Roman literary world “yield no testimony to the origin and progress of the Christian faith and practice”:—Seneca (who lived 3–65 c.E.), Petronius (?–66), Pliny the Elder (23–79), Juvenal

¹ Greek, *Apokalypsis*, revelation; derived from *apo*, from; *kalypto*, cover.

² *The New Testament*, p. 16.

(60-140), Martial (40-104), Quintilian (40-? 118), Epic-tetus (40-120), Plutarch (45-120), and Apion (20-48).

Tacitus (55-120) and Pliny the Younger (61-105) refer to the Christian people, and Suetonius (75-160) mentions the punishment inflicted by Nero upon the Christians, "a sect of men who professed a new and evil superstition," as well as disturbances raised by Jews in Rome at the instigation of "Chrestus."

Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.-60 C.E.) and Josephus (37-100), both Jewish writers of celebrity and integrity, are also silent. It is especially remarkable that the latter, while describing religious movements among his contemporary Jews, says nothing of Christianity. Interpolations were made subsequently by interested writers to supply the defect.

Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, to which various dates, ranging from about 112 to 140 C.E., have been assigned, mentions no New Testament books, but recommends "the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle," quotes good maxims from the Old Testament, and tries to reconcile opposing parties of Christians by appeals to the "words of the Lord Jesus" in terms which, although similar to the teaching in the New Testament, are not paralleled by any passage therein. Clement, further, mentions no details of the life of Jesus.

So much for contemporary literature apart, save Philo and Josephus, from the Jews; let it now be seen what appeared in the period immediately before and after the Christian Era—writings which were not included in the Old Testament. They are mostly of an apocalyptic nature, a canonical example of which has been discussed already in the book of *Daniel* (p. 122). These writings appeared between 200 B.C. and 100 C.E., and are briefly as follows:—

1. The book of *Enoch*, composed in the last two centuries B.C., deals with "evil angels, the temporary triumph of sin, the intervention of the divine Anointed

One, or Son of Man, the doom of the wicked in the fiery abyss, and the opening of Paradise to the righteous."¹ Words and ideas derived from it are traceable in *Jude*, *Apocalypse*, *Acts*, *Romans*, and other New Testament books.

2. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (the *Didaché*, see p. 163), written between 130 B.C. and 10 C.E., and translated into Greek. It is the first Jewish work to speak of the home of the saints as the "New Jerusalem."

3. The *Assumption of Moses* (7-30 C.E.) describes the Advent of the Heavenly One. One passage compares closely with *Matt.* xxiv, 29.

4. The *Secrets of Enoch* (1-50 C.E.) contains the first conception in religious literature of the duration of the Messianic kingdom for a thousand years.

5. The *Apocalypse of Baruch* (50-90 C.E.) appeared in the time of Paul, and was composed in part before and in part after the fall of Jerusalem in 70. Its tone is Pharisaic, and it states that the just are saved by works and that righteousness is by the law.

6. The *Prophecy of the Last Days*, which forewarns against false Messiahs, prepares for the fall of Jerusalem, and looks for the coming of the Son of Man. It was written about 68 C.E., and much of it has been incorporated in *Matt.* (xxiv, 1-44, and x, 17-23), *Mark* (xiii, 1-37), and *Luke* (xvi, 5-36).

§ 2. *The Order in which the Books Appeared*

At the outset the Christians possessed no literature of their own, and therefore adopted the books of the Old Testament as their sacred writings. The new faith was, indeed, founded upon Jewish religion and tradition, and naturally took its scriptures. Slowly, however, there grew

¹ F. J. Gould, *The New Testament*, p. 47.

up a number of writings dealing with the Christian faith, some of which became, in the course of some two centuries, canonical, and were combined to form what is now known as the New Testament. Like every other known collection of sacred writings, this compilation was a product of evolution, and did not assume its present form until after many years. Some of the materials upon which the books were founded were probably manuscript memoranda of maxims, sayings, and formulæ collected and arranged for teaching purposes; but to these were gradually added accounts which alleged to be particulars of the life of Jesus.

An examination of the New Testament clearly shows the existence of two separate religious conceptions, both of which have existed, usually concurrently, in every great religion. They may be called the popular and the theological ideas. In the Christian faith the former is contained in the Jesus idea, the conception of a popular figure of flesh and blood individuality. He is originally essentially a *man*, Yahweh's "holy servant"; and there are strong reasons for the assumption that Jesus (putting aside for the moment any doubts as to his historicity) was at first regarded as a man and not as a divine being. As such he is revered by Mohammedans. Many of the sayings attributed to him by the Gospels make him expressly deny that he is anything but a man, and the fact that these sayings contradict others reputed to be his furnishes one of the most serious discrepancies to be found in the New Testament. The more liberal-minded among Jews have always accepted Jesus as a wise and good man, but have refused to accept him as divine, and the contradictory sayings alluded to strongly support them. Among the more ignorant, especially the Polish and Russian, Jews (who form the majority of the race) it is the belief that Jesus proclaimed himself as the Messiah and posed as such, and that he incurred the death penalty justly as a false prophet. In this Jesus may be well

compared to Buddha and Confucius. Jesus and Buddha (upon whose authentic existence doubt has been cast likewise) were both saviours and teachers, about whom has gathered much mythical material; both were deified, and the great faiths founded upon them have become markedly corrupt. Partly on that account they have been practically abandoned by thousands of thinking men. Fortunately for Confucius, however, he was never accorded divinity, but has remained for the two thousand odd years which have elapsed since his death no more than a man of great intellectual powers and high principles. No "faith" was founded around his personality, and his sayings and teachings are to-day venerated and respected by all classes of Chinese alike.

It is the popular idea that is found in the Gospels, and it supplies the want of the ignorant masses who yearn for a "near" god—a god who is, as it were, one of themselves; one they can understand, who understands them, feels for them in their troubles, and sympathizes with their struggles.

The human-god idea, however, does not satisfy the intellectual minority. That type of man requires something much more mysterious, a kind of divine essence, or abstract principle, smacking (like the "Logos") of magic, rather than anything so simple as a high type of man. Thus arises the theological idea, which is essentially that which animates the Pauline writings. In such a conception of faith there is no necessity for any elaborate picture of Jesus, the thought being directed rather to the "divine Logos," after the fashion of human philosophy in all ages. The conception of the "Logos," or reason, as a divine attribute, essence, or principle, was no new thing, but merely a production of the preceding ages during which civilized man had been an abstract thinker. In Egypt Thoth was the "word"; Nabu in Assyria; Agni in India. Hermes, Apollo, Athênê, and Metis (the personified Reason and Intelligence of Zeus), all repre-

sented the mysterious reason, intelligence, word, or name, the all-pervading, endowed with the highest kind of magic. The longing to evolve this type of idea was the natural outcome of the trend of intellectual thought before the dawn of modern science. The best minds were but groping in the dark, seeking for light, but finding only a twilight, in which they mistook ideas for things. With the development of science another type of intellectual man is evolving, to whom appeal only those things which can be proved to be facts. It is this attitude of mind alone which can find truth and at the same time realize that it exists not in the imagination, but in experience. The method of inquiry which relies solely on facts yearly gathers strength, and is sternly inimical to superstition and the creeds which originate therefrom.

To the common people, whose minds could not soar to pre-scientific flights of fancy, the "Logos" was unsatisfying, save perhaps for the magic it denoted. They required the human-god idea. But such is the superstition of ignorance that even a popular hero needed to be invested with something mysterious; hence the surrounding myths of virgin-birth and the like.

The two conceptions are combined in the Christian faith, the one being represented in the Gospels, the other in the epistles attributed to Paul and his fellow apostles. It follows that the theological idea, being the conception of the intellectuals who alone could put their doctrines into writing, would be the one found in the older scriptures. The popular conception would be recorded later, since the intellectual minority, realizing their ideas to be unintelligible and therefore unacceptable, would find it necessary to furnish something likely to appeal to the more simple-minded majority, containing as it did slaves and men and women of low degree intellectually and socially. This is precisely what is found when the dates at which the different books of the

New Testament were compiled are examined. The Pauline writings were first composed, the Gospels with their biographical details coming later. The preaching Jesus was created *after* the Pauline epistles were written.

In 1912 the number of Greek manuscripts extant¹ were fourteen papyri, one hundred and sixty-eight "uncials," or large letter writings, and about four thousand "minuscles," or small letter manuscripts. Among the first named is a papyrus book-leaf found at Oxyrhynchus in 1896, and said to date from the third century C.E.; it contains verses from *Matt. i.* The uncial manuscripts on vellum first appeared in the fourth century, and to them belongs that known as the "Vatican Codex," which does not contain *Hebrews*, the Pauline pastoral epistles, or *Revelation*. All the New Testament is found, with other documents, in a manuscript called the "Sinaitic Code," preserved at Petrograd, and probably written in Egypt in the fourth century. A full list of these manuscripts will be found in Mr. Gould's *The New Testament*. The "Received Text"—i.e., the one in modern use—is believed to have been compiled at Antioch, in Syria, about 350 C.E.

The older portions of the Pauline writings show no knowledge of any biography or teaching of Jesus, save for a very doubtful passage in 1 *Corinthians* xi, 23–8, referring to Jesus at the supper. Later on the Christian writers appear to have certain accounts which were evidently expanded from generation to generation until, by the end of the second century, there existed the four canonical gospels. These are, however, not known to have been completed even then. In a treatise against the Christians, written by Celsus between 170 and 180, the Gospels are described as having been subject to numerous alterations. Additions were possible after the

¹ Sir F. G. Kenyon, *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*.

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time of Origen (? 182–251), who replied to Celsus with the feeble argument that the alterations were the work of heretics.

With the four canonical gospels appeared several apocryphal books, which were equally popular for a considerable time, until they were finally discarded by the Church. These apocryphal scriptures will be referred to later.

The following table shows the approximate period at which the different books of the New Testament were compiled, with brief remarks upon their salient characters:—

BOOK.	DATE COMPILED.	REMARKS.
<i>Matthew</i>	Early in 2nd Cent.	Shows a Hebrew tone, and is respectful towards the Old Testament system. Adapted and edited for dogmatic purposes, as it shows traces of divisions into 5, 7, and 3, probably for convenience in teaching. Chaps. i and ii and the mention of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" (xxviii, 19) were inserted later.
<i>Mark</i>	End of 1st Cent.	The shortest. Its Greek is least polished. <i>Matthew</i> and <i>Luke</i> were probably founded upon it. xvi, 9–20 was added subsequently.
<i>Luke</i>	First half of 2nd Cent.	<i>Luke</i> and <i>Acts</i> were written by the same person. Shows a tendency to universalism rather than rigid Judaism. Written in good Greek, with a regard to dramatic interest and dialogue.

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BOOK.	DATE COMPILED.	REMARKS.
<i>John</i>	About 140.	Gives a new and philosophical presentation of the Christian faith. Chap. xxi is a subsequent insertion.
<i>Acts</i>	About 130 to 150.	Has little historical value. Does not accord with the Pauline epistles, and gives similar careers to Paul and Peter, often doubling their actions.
<i>Romans</i>	58 (i to xiv, 23).	Represents the Gospel as a new liberty built upon old Mosaic law, and love as the truest fulfilment of the Law. Chap. xv is not genuine.
1 and 2 <i>Corinthians</i>	57-8.	Written soon after Paul's <i>Letter of Expostulation</i> sent to Corinth, in which he pleads his claim to the honour of Apostleship. This was added to 2 <i>Corinth.</i> (x-xiii). 2 <i>Corinth.</i> (i-ix) followed. About this time Paul communicated with Christists at Ephesus; and a portion of the epistle is now in <i>Romans</i> (xvi, 1-20). Shows some disorder in the text, as vi, 14-vii, 1, and x-xiii.
<i>Galatians</i>	58.	A controversial pamphlet of conflicting temperaments and ideas.
<i>Ephesians</i>	1st Cent. Re- written 2nd Cent.	Contains some Pauline passages. <i>Ephesians</i> and <i>Colossians</i> both contain Gnostic terms, as "Sophia" (the divine wisdom), "Pleroma" (the divine fullness), "Gnosis" (the

BOOK.	DATE COMPILED.	REMARKS.
		divine revelation), "Phronesis" (judgment), etc. ¹
<i>Philippians</i>	62-3.	Supposed to have been written by Paul in prison. Some passages, as iii, 2, are doubtful.
<i>Colossians</i>	1st Cent. Re-written 2nd Cent.	Written in prison. Gnostic terms (see <i>Ephesians</i>) introduced in 2nd Cent.
1 and 2 <i>Thessalonians</i>	53-4.	1 <i>Thess.</i> ii, 14-6, is probably an interpolation, as it appears to refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 70, and Paul is reputed to have died in 64. 2 <i>Thess.</i> contains peculiar repetitions of the first book, and also a Christian apocalypse (see below).
1 and 2 <i>Timothy</i> <i>Titus</i>	} 2nd Cent.	Three pastoral epistles written in Paul's name, apparently by a dweller in Asia Minor, to edify members of the Christian Societies. Advise saints in general, and give special directions to bishops to avoid brawling and intemperance. The tone of 2 <i>Tim.</i> is very bitter. It has been much interpolated, and contains 46 words not in the other epistles.
<i>Philemon</i>	1st Cent.	May be genuine.

¹ The *Gnostics* were certain religious groups who developed the doctrine of the secret Revelation (or "Gnosis"), postulating a Primal Man, existing before the present world, who was embodied in many forms until he assumed that of Christ. This Christ was regarded as an ideal figure representing human salvation, but not related to any historical person such as Jesus.

ORDER IN WHICH BOOKS APPEARED 181

BOOK.	DATE COMPILED.	REMARKS.
<i>Hebrews</i>	2nd Cent.	Suggests that the ancient Jewish ritual was a foreshadowing of Jesus officiating as High Priest in the spiritual temple (ix, 1-5).
<i>James</i>	2nd Cent.	An ethical essay rather than a Christian document. It contains no Jesuist or Christian doctrine, except the added Ebionitic invective against the rich. Names Jesus only twice; one is clearly an interpolation, the other presumptively so. Contains a moral exhortation to Jews comparable to the pre-Christian "Teaching of the Twelve Patriarchs."
1 and 2 <i>Peter</i>	First half of 2nd Cent.	Imitates language of Paul and James. Its reference to Jesus as the Lamb without blemish indicates the gradual development of the Messiah-lamb conception of the Apocalypse.
1, 2, and 3 <i>John</i>	Late 2nd Cent.	Owed their origin to the "Logos" movement. The authors are unknown, but they belonged to the same school of thought as the gospel of <i>John</i> .
<i>Jude</i>	100-50.	A fulmination against false teachers. Quotes <i>Enoch</i> (see above, p. 172).
<i>Revelation</i>	1st Cent.; iv-xxii, 5, prob- ably written about 68.	Essentially an adaptation of Jewish apocalyptic literature to Christian ideas (see below).

§ 3. *The Three Groups of Books Considered Separately*

A.—THE TEACHING GROUP

It has been seen at what periods approximately the various books collected together in the New Testament were written. The reader must, however, be reminded that many years passed before they were formed into a fixed and sacred canon. It remains to consider, in slightly more detail, the three groups into which these books were classified at the opening of this chapter. As it is evident that the Scriptures which are devoted to the expounding of the Christian faith—the *teaching* group—are the oldest, it is more convenient that they should be dealt with first, and that the *Acts of the Apostles*, although it purports to be historical, should be considered with them.

Much controversy has raged around the authenticity of these books, and the balance of opinion at the present time leans to the conclusion that the genuine character of the Pauline epistles is very doubtful. The critics of the nineteenth century, after much examination, concluded that *Romans*, *Galatians*, and the two books of *Corinthians* were the genuine work of Paul; but Professor W. van Manen¹ and other careful students have affirmed that not one single epistle in the New Testament can be ascribed to him, their chief reason being that the theology and church organization depicted in them show a development too mature and complicated to have been possible before 64 C.E., the reputed year of Paul's death.

The older portions of these epistles display no knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus, and they contain numerous Greek words and phrases from the *Didaché*, which, as has been indicated, was written about 100 B.C. and translated into Greek.

The book of the *Acts* contains details concerning the life of Paul, but it is not always in agreement with the

¹ *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Art. Paul.

epistles attributed to him ; indeed, the book is of practically no historical value. The chief of these discrepancies may be enumerated as follows :—

1. There are three versions of Paul's vision of Christ at Damascus :—

(a) Paul's companions see the heavenly light, but hear no one.

(b) They hear the voice, but see no one.

(c) Paul alone sees the light, and hears the voice.

2. The circumcision of Timothy by Paul is spoken of in *Acts*, but the rite is opposed in the epistles.

3. In *Acts* Paul encourages four men to shave their heads in a Nazarite vow, but scorns such a thing in the epistles.

4. He affirms in *Acts* that as a Pharisee he was harassed for believing in the Resurrection, but in the epistles he glories in the cross of Christ and lays no stress on the Pharisaic doctrine.

5. The actions of Peter and Paul are doubled in *Acts*.

Throughout *Acts* the attitude towards the Romans is friendly, and it is probable that the author (who, it is believed, also wrote the Gospel of *Luke*) intended his story to emphasize the unity of the early Christians (who were by no means in perfect accord) and the good relations between them and the Roman authorities.

It is remarkable that nothing is said in the New Testament of the death of so important an apostle as Paul. There are, however, traditional accounts of his career and end which are reducible to the following dates :—

35 Conversion.

38 First visit to Jerusalem.

53 Various travels until second visit to Jerusalem.

58 Trial before Felix.

60 Prisoner in Cæsarea.

64 Journey to Rome and death.

With the exception of the trial before Felix and its

resumption before Festus (for which reliance can be placed upon Roman history), these dates are questionable. If he died in 64, he cannot have written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70, although the words in *Romans* ix have been considered to refer to that event. Taking the reputed date of his death, however, it would have been about thirty-four years after the supposed death of Jesus in 30. This gives but a short time for the evolution of a doctrine so mature as that found in the epistles. There is, however, little doubt that Paul ranked in the second century as an historical personage, in whose name it was worth while to write and even to forge.

It has already been pointed out that the Pauline teachings and the Gospels represent two separate conceptions of religious thought—the intellectual, appealing to the mind, and the popular, appealing to the emotions. It is a very plausible supposition that the Pauline writings do not contain a “creed which was slowly elaborated from a primitive religious romance of Jesus of Nazareth, but rather of a double and parallel movement, the result of a widespread and continuous agitation of thought and feeling in the Roman Empire; one movement focussing itself in doctrines and principles such as Paul’s, the other revealing itself in parables, hero stories, and dramatic apocalypses. Modern Europe illustrates the action of the same two types of religious intellect and emotion; and the most religious country in the world, India, has for ages presented similar evolutions of popular love of the dramatic on the one hand, and of philosophic and ethical speculation on the other.”¹ In other words, the intellectual conception was a reflection of the philosophical thought of the times; the popular one merely sought the ages-old ideas of the vegetation-god under a fresh disguise. In support of this contention may be mentioned the affinity of thought that exists between the writings ascribed to

¹ F. J. Gould, *The New Testament*, p. 33.

Paul and those of the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca (3 B.C.-65 C.E.). Thus, to mention only three of the parallels which are to be found between them:—

<i>Paul</i>	<i>Seneca</i>
"Overcome evil with good."	"Pertinacious goodness overcomes evil men."
"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."	"To obey God is liberty."
"There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."	"Virtue is barred to none; she is open to all, she receives all, she invites all—gentlefolk, freedmen, slaves, kings, exiles."

In the reason for this affinity of thought—that the ethical ideas contained in the writings of both were drawn from the same general thought of the age—probably lies the secret of the Pauline epistles.

B.—THE HISTORICAL GROUP

Attention must now be turned to the *Four Gospels*. Reference to the table on p. 178 will make prominent a fact of no small significance, and which lends support to much that has been said above. Leaving out of consideration the *Acts* and *Revelation*, it is noteworthy that ten, or nearly half, of the twenty-one Apostolic writings were compiled before the first century had terminated; whereas only one of the four Gospels (*Mark*) made its appearance by that time, the remaining three not coming into existence until the first half of the second century was well advanced.

Between the first three Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* there is a general similarity in the method of describing the life and teachings of Jesus. They therefore form a Triple Tradition, and, as they present a common view or synopsis of the life of the reputed founder of the Christian faith, they are called *The Synoptics*. They give the impression of having been compiled from a common source which has now been lost, but the character of

which may be surmised. A comparison between *Matt.* xvi, 13-21, *Mark* viii, 27-31, and *Luke* ix, 18-22, will demonstrate the close similarities which exist between the three. The Synoptics must, therefore, be considered together and apart from the Gospel of *John*, which belongs to a different category.

The opinion of modern critics is that the compilers of *Matthew* and *Luke* took their material from *Mark* and from some other source which has been lost, and which was mainly composed of the sayings of Jesus. The supposed document is called the "non-Marcan" source, or "Q."¹ This has been reconstructed by Professor Harnack, and the result of his labour² shows that, while *Matthew* copied it more faithfully, he added passages which suggest a later state of church organization than suits the earlier Messiah conception. *Luke*, on the other hand, recast it, but was more conservative in following the order of the document.

The chief points in this lost narrative are:—(1) It contains no mention of the death or resurrection of Jesus. (2) The horizon of Jesus in these sayings is wholly Jewish and Palestinian. (3) From their character the sayings can belong only to the earliest age. (4) It records no miracles, and only two cures are mentioned—the blind demoniac (*Matt.* xii, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 43-5; *Luke* xi, 14, 17, 19, 23-36) and the paralytic girl (*Matt.* vii, 28, viii, 5-10; *Luke* vii, 1-10). (5) The compiler considers Jesus to have become the Messiah at his baptism. Jesus never claims to be the Messiah, but rather, Mohammed-like, to possess the final revelation of God's nature. (6) Its precepts are addressed to the immediate disciples, and do not refer to organization and Church discipline; this suggests that they are of earlier date than the organized Church of Jerusalem referred to in the

¹ Q is short for the German *Quellen*, spring.

² For the full text of the non-Marcian source see F. C. Conybeare's *Myth, Magic, and Morals*, pp. 108-26.

Pauline epistles. The critics consider "Q" to have been a translation from an Aramaic document.

Mark, the oldest of the Synoptics, is the shortest, written in the least polished Greek, and offers no account of the birth, childhood, or resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, the legend of his birth at Bethlehem is evidently entirely unknown to Mark and the author of the fourth Gospel. The last twelve verses in the Received Text are an addition, the true ending being at xvi, 8, as is the case with the two older manuscripts of the New Testament. Apparently, *Mark* was written for general readers; it gives picturesque detail, and adds interpretations (as of "Talitha cumi") to words likely to be unintelligible to other than Jewish readers.

Matthew was the work of an unknown writer (probably a Palestine Jewish Christian). It has a Hebrew tone, and is respectful towards Jewish law. From the numerical feature (alluded to in the Table, p. 178) discovered by Sir J. C. Hawkins,¹ it is likely that it was employed as a teaching manual, the arrangements in fives, sevens, and threes (e.g., seven blessings; seven woes against the Scribes and Pharisees; three duties of alms, prayer, and fasting; three degrees of sin and punishment) being an aid to memorizing. It also contains the formula of Baptism (xxviii, 9), and is the only Synoptic to speak of the "Kingdom of Heaven," which phrase occurs thirty-two times, and of the "Church" (*ekklesia*). Hence critics consider that *Matthew* was a book compiled for some dogmatic purpose.

Luke, as has been said, was written by the same person who wrote *Acts*. Its tone is universal rather than Jewish, and therefore Jesus is traced back to Adam, in contrast to *Matthew*, in which the pedigree stops at Abraham. The Samaritan is exalted, and women are treated with more consideration from a religious point of view than

¹ *Horæ Synopticæ*. (Clarendon Press, Oxford; 1909.)

in the other Gospels. *Luke* makes a point of trying to harmonize everything with the social side of life.

Allusion has already been made (p. 160) to the discrepancies which appear in the Synoptic chronology when it is compared with the more exact records of Roman history: the statements in *Luke* ii, 2, concerning Quirinius, and *Matt.* ii, 13, as to Herod cannot be reconciled either with each other or with the Roman records.

The Gospel of *John* belongs to an entirely different aspect of thought from that of the three Synoptics. The first Jewish Christians were Unitarians, and at the dawn of the second century the orthodox Christians possessed no more definite theology than that of the ignorant votaries of any pagan saviour-god. To these *John*, compiled about 140 C.E., brought a theistic creed; it offered a new and philosophical presentation of the faith more acceptable to the order of mind to which the Pauline teachings appealed.

John represents Jesus in the light of a being with divine attributes, and suppresses all that savours too much of common human clay. It omits his baptism by John the Baptist, but accentuates his divine nature by describing how the Spirit of God descended "like a dove" upon his head. It is silent concerning virgin-birth, shepherd adoration, circumcision, the flight into Egypt, and the disputing with the Temple doctors. Instead, it invests Jesus with symbolic ideas and attributes. These are sevenfold: he is the "Bread,"¹ the "Light," the "Door," the "Good Shepherd," the "Resurrection," the "Way," and the "Vine"¹—attributes applied to other saviour-gods.

The Fourth Gospel contains no apocalyptic element; in place of an awe-inspiring Day of Judgment, emphasis is

¹ Dionysus was "the Vine" to his votaries, and Osiris was "the Bread of Everlastingness."

laid upon the Comforter, the Peace, and the Second Birth.

Chapter xxi, which is written in a different Greek style, was probably added by another writer.

With *John* and its emphasis of the doctrine of the "Logos" the Christian faith was invested with a more definite and orthodox form, and "one may surmise that, if the doctrines represented in the Fourth Gospel had not been developed, a very considerable mass of the more cultured citizens of the Roman Empire would have withheld their support, and the Christian faith would have been confined largely to the proletariat, just as the faith of Mithra appealed mainly to the soldiers."¹

C.—PROPHECY

The development of apocalyptic literature among the Jews between 200 B.C. and 100 C.E., to which allusion was made on p. 172, could not fail to influence the Christian writers and be used by them for their own purposes. There are hints of it in 2 *Thessalonians* (which is, indeed, a miniature Christian Apocalypse), *Matt.* x and xxiv, *Mark* xiii, and *Luke* xvi; but the most striking apocalyptic work in the New Testament is that of *Revelation*, attributed to "St. John the Divine," but really a production mainly Jewish. According to the critics of the twentieth century, this book, written in Greek, was produced during the reign of Domitian (81-96 C.E.), but it is an adaptation, with interpolations, of several Jewish works to Christian needs.

Shortly after 64 (the reputed year of Paul's death) an obscure Jewish sect in Asia Minor was persecuted, and one of its members, Antipas (*Rev.* ii, 13), suffered martyrdom. An adherent wrote a *Book of the Unveiling*, or *Apocalypse*, which was incorporated in *Revelation* iv-xxii, 5. This, since it contains references to Rome,

¹ F. J. Gould, *The New Testament*, p. 85.

symbolized as the "Beast," was probably written about 68. The Beast's "number is six hundred and sixty and six," referring to the fact that the name of the Emperor Nero, written in Hebrew letters (which also count as numerals), is 666. It describes the final judgments of God on the Pagan world, and, in chap. vii, the "sealing" of the tribes of Israel. Dan is not included, since, according to an ancient tradition, it was from Dan that Anti-Christ would come.

Rev. i, 9-iii is founded upon the *Seven Epistles* to the seven groups, or churches, written by a disciple of the same sect, the chief faith of which appears to have been the expectation of a warlike Messiah.

It is to be noted that there are very few allusions to Jesus in *Revelation*; what are to be found are interpolations in a work essentially Jewish.

§ 4. *Apocryphal Books*

As with the Old so with the New Testament, a number of books were produced which were, for various reasons, not included in the canon. Indeed, were all the books purporting to be sacred included in the New Testament that collection would be double its present size. Certain of those now to be found therein had their claims to a place in the canon temporarily disputed; these, called from that fact the Antilegomena,¹ were *Hebrews*, *James*, *Jude*, *2 Peter*, *2* and *3 John*, and *Revelation*.

The chief apocryphal books of the New Testament are as follows:—

The *Logia*, or sayings of Christ, a Greek fragment found at Oxyrhynchus.

The Gospels according to the (1) Hebrews, written in Aramaic about 120, and of Ebionitic origin, translated by Jerome into Greek and Latin; (2) Nazarenes, written about 110-40; (3) Egyptians, probably the earliest

¹ Greek, *Anti*, against; *legō*, speak.

Gnostic Gospel, showing a knowledge of the four Canonical Gospels.

The Gospels of Thomas, Peter (written about 140), the Twelve, Matthias, Nicodemus, and the Infancy.

The Acts of Andrew, John, Peter, Paul, and Pilate.

The Preaching of Peter.

The Abgar Epistles.

The Epistles of Barnabas to the Laodiceans, of Polycarp, Ignatius, and Clement (see p. 172).

NOTE TO CHAPTER VIII

"THE JESUS PROBLEM"

REFERENCE must again be made to the question of the historicity of Jesus, a problem about which there is considerable controversy. In Chap. VII was discussed the close parallel between Jesus and the universal cult of the vegetation-god, and it was suggested that Christianity arose in the mystery celebrated in honour of the representative of a deity as an atoning sacrifice. That such an annual ceremony was celebrated is very likely, and the possibility that the victim on a particular occasion happened to be some one named Jesus, or Joshua, would have fitted in well with the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. With the knowledge which has in recent times been gathered concerning the methods of god-making and the universal craving for saviour-gods and teaching-gods among mankind, it is easy to see how old myths could be applied to and fresh legends have accumulated around such a figure as the victim sacrificed in conformity with annual custom when he, on one particular occasion, happened to bear so auspicious a name as Jesus—a name which to the religious Jew was redolent of divine attributes. When the period happened to be one of political unrest amid a people chafing for freedom the possibility is strengthened. Christianity is by no means the only religion in which an extensive literature of sacred scriptures has been formed around a vegetation- or sun-god, a literature held to be inspired quite as much as the books forming the New Testament.

How exactly the story told in the Synoptics arose is not known, but that its growth was gradual over a period of about a hundred years is certain. The theory formulated by Mr. J. M. Robertson to account for it demands mention. This

theory suggests that the story of the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Passion, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection was compiled from the word-book and stage directions of a mystery-play of a vegetation-god acted annually by some of the religious communities from which Christianity originated; so that, as Mr. Gould has said,¹ "Religion, art, and ancient tradition may all have co-operated in the creation of the Christian gospel."

Mr. Robertson pushes home his hypothesis with a great wealth of detail, and it is, according to Mr. Gould,² "increasingly gaining acceptance." The arguments used by him to support it are too numerous for discussion here, and the reader is referred to the works cited in the Bibliography. It must, however, be mentioned that there is one point which creates considerable difficulty and makes the acceptance of the theory impossible to many. The Jews themselves have never questioned the historical existence of Jesus, and, had his story originated in the way Mr. Robertson suggests, the Rabbis would, in the furious battles which waged round Christianity during the first two centuries of the Christian Era, have found a potent weapon in the retort that Jesus was only a figure in a play. There is no evidence that this retort was ever made.

If, however, a real person bearing the significant name of Jesus happened to have been the victim in an annual sacrifice on one occasion, and in consequence he thus possessed certain necessary qualifications for a Messiah, a new cult might easily have arisen concerning him, especially when the circumstances of the time are taken into consideration. With the great popularity of mystery-dramas among the common people in ancient religions, the peculiar circumstances of the event might well have formed the motive of one of these performances, and the Gospel story might have been compiled from the book used by the performers. In that case the historicity of the individual who was the central figure around which the drama was woven need not be contested, and it may be taken that a Jesus existed about whom accumulated the usual supernatural paraphernalia of a vegetation-god, with his virgin-birth, miracles, etc. This hypothesis would strengthen Mr. Robertson's main contention.

¹ *The New Testament*, p. 82.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 12.

CHAPTER IX

LIVES OF GREAT TEACHERS AND THEIR LEGACIES TO MANKIND

§ 1. *Introduction*

AN attempt has now been made to follow the course of evolution from the nebula which became the solar system to the appearance of man upon earth; thence to note his development, very gradual at first, but slowly gathering momentum as his intelligence increased with experience and the acquisition of language, until he had reached the stage at which he can be regarded as a civilized being, founding cities, developing arts, commerce, and written traditions. It has been shown how, from primitive Naturism and Animism, man's religious conceptions have gradually developed, until from them were evolved the great religious systems of the world. Only one of these systems (since Christianity is the direct offspring of Judaism) has been considered in any detail, that being the one with which, in dealing with the story of the Bible, this work was specially concerned.

It has been shown how the books forming the Bible originated, and the reader must have realized already that the teachings contained in the Old and New Testaments do not occupy the unique position claimed for them. Indeed, of the reputed teachings of the founder of Christianity himself there is not one that has not been taken from, or cannot be paralleled in, other and older doctrines. As a matter of fact, the ethical basis of all the great religions is the same, and every new faith that has appeared has merely re-expressed it without

altering its fundamental significance. This basis is what is known as the *Golden Rule*, which is embodied in the command "Do as you would be done by," and expressed in the one word "Reciprocity." There is no virtue that cannot be included in this single maxim. It has been proclaimed by every man, and is not the perquisite of any single faith. Its germ was in the time that man first realized the meaning of social organization. Unfortunately, however, man is adept in protestation, but clumsy in fulfilment. Since also the vast majority of mankind does not stop to think, but mistakes noise for zeal and words for deeds, those who shout loudest are accepted at their own valuation, while silent merit often is left unheeded. Such listeners hear and act not, but acquiesce and forget. The same ethical ideals are proclaimed age after age and meet with the same fate; the thinking minority strives to practise them, the unthinking many repeat them but do not act upon them.

Ardent supporters of Christianity have proclaimed it as the one faith which has worked for man's salvation and stood the test of ages for charity, self-denial, and piety. They forget, however, that no pagan annals can show anything more diabolical and horrid than (to take one example out of many) the massacre of the Albigenses, and that Christianity has not endured a half of the years during which the religion of Ancient Egypt existed. Nor can Christianity show a more sublime picture of self-sacrifice than that told in the pagan stories of Damon and Pythias, or Orestes and Pylades. Finally, neither Christianity nor any other faith can offer a collection of purer and more lofty ideals than those which were inculcated, and, what is better, practised, by the Egyptian Reformer-king, Akh-na-ten, 3,270 years ago.

Neither Christianity nor any other man-made creed is responsible for any improvement or increase in the humaner qualities that are discoverable in mankind;

rather has the slow process of man's social evolution improved his creeds. Had Christianity been the wondrous success which it is claimed to be, such an event as the Great War of 1914-18 must have been impossible, unless Yahweh has relapsed into his old character of a fighting-god; and to those who would protest that the Church has civilized man must be returned the answer that rather is it man who is civilizing the Church.

A brief examination of the lives and sayings of the world's great teachers, with extracts from the latter, will, therefore, complete the task undertaken in this book by showing that the main teachings of the great religions which have dominated the civilized world are the same, and that they have been the ideals of human conduct throughout the ages.

The selections made embrace the following, placed chronologically :—

- B.C. From 4400. *Egypt*. Book of the Dead; Ke'gemni;
Ptah-Hôtep; Akhnaten.
2400. *India*. Brahmanism.
2250. *Chaldæa*. Hammurabi.
600-500. *India*. Buddha.
583. *Persia*. Zarathustra.
600-500. *China*. Lao-Tsze; Kung-Foo-Tsze.
Greece.
C.E. 106 to 180. *Rome*. Cicero; Lucretius; Seneca;
Epictetus; Ælian; Marcus Aurelius.
632. *Arab*. Mohammed.

It may be pointed out that between 1000 B.C. and 200 C.E. the Jewish sacred literature was slowly evolving, although it is doubtful whether the Jews possessed the art of writing before 900 B.C. In this literature, as in every other sacred writing, were contained high ethical conceptions, as exemplified in *Isaiah* and *Micah*.

§ 2. *The Teachings and Writings of Ancient Egypt*

One of the most elaborate of the great religious systems of the world was that of Ancient Egypt. It lasted at least four thousand years, and, although a complicated system of many gods, its ethics were equal to the teachings of any other great faith, Christianity not excepted. Space does not allow of even a brief exposition of the ancient Egyptian pantheon, which contained sun-deities, saviour-gods, and numerous divinities of animistic origin. Its ethical code may be judged by its great sacred work, the so-called *Book of the Dead*. This title is given to the collection of funerary texts which the ancient Egyptian scribes composed for the benefit of the dead, and which comprise magic names, formulæ, spells and incantations, hymns, litanies, and prayers. A large number of these texts have been preserved in sepulchral inscriptions upon the walls of tombs, on sarcophagi and coffins, or written upon papyrus rolls which were buried with the dead man for use during his passage through the underworld. It is from these manuscripts that the title under which they are known was derived, as the Egyptian tomb-robbers gave to every such roll found with mummies the name "Kitâb al-Mayyit"—i.e., "Book of the Dead Man." The origin of the texts found in the *Book of the Dead* is lost in antiquity; by the Egyptians themselves they were believed to have been composed by Thoth, the god reputed to have bestowed upon them the art of writing, and they were certainly in general use as far back as about 3700 B.C.

The following quotation from the "Chapter of the Judgment of Osiris" illustrates the high code of ethics which the Egyptians had evolved. The sentences were to be repeated by the deceased on entering the Judgment Hall:—

"Behold, I have come to thee, and I have brought *maat* [i.e., truth, integrity] to thee. I have destroyed

sin for thee. I have not sinned against men. I have not oppressed [my] kinsfolk. I have done no wrong in the place of truth. I have not known worthless folk. I have not wrought evil. I have not defrauded the oppressed one of his goods. I have not done the things that the gods abominate. I have not vilified a servant to his master. I have not caused pain. I have not let any man hunger. I have made no one to weep. I have not committed murder. I have not commanded any to commit murder for me. I have inflicted pain on no man. I have not defrauded the temples of their oblations. I have not purloined the cakes of the gods. I have not stolen the offerings to the spirits [i.e., the dead]. I have not committed fornication. I have not polluted myself in the holy places of the god of my city. I have not diminished from the bushel. I did not take from or add to the acre-measure. I did not encroach on the fields [of others]. I have not added to the weights of the scales. I have not misread the pointer of the scales. I have not taken milk from the mouths of children. I have not driven cattle from their pastures. I have not snared the birds of the gods. I have not caught fish with fish of their kind. I have not stopped water [when it should flow]. I have not cut the dam of a canal. I have not extinguished a fire when it should burn. I have not altered the times of the chosen meat offerings. I have not turned away the cattle [intended for] offerings. I have not repulsed the god at his appearances. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure....."

Later in the chapter comes the address which the dead man had to make to the gods after this comprehensive negative declaration of innocence of sin, and this contains the following passage:—

"I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, raiment to the naked, and a boat to him that needed one. I have made holy offerings to the gods, and sepulchral offerings to the beatified dead. Be ye then

my saviours, be ye my protectors, and make no accusation against me before the Great God. I am pure of mouth and clean of hands; therefore it hath been said by those who saw me, 'Come in peace, come in peace.' "

These quotations serve at least to show that the Ancient Egyptian code of ethics was an exalted one, containing every essential which is usually supposed to make a "good Christian." Whether this code was lived up to as much by the one as by the other is hardly the question; the code itself was there.

There are, however, other ethical works preserved of the Egyptians besides that so fully set out in the *Book of the Dead*. These are the "Instructions" of Ptah-hôtep (3550 B.C.) and Ke'gemni, or Kaquemna (3998 B.C.). They are nearly six thousand years old, and occupy an unique place in the literature of the world. Thirteen hundred years earlier than the code of Hammurabi and two thousand years before the Vedas, they are the oldest remaining books extant, and fully equal the ethics contained in the Old and New Testaments. Their preservation is due to the fact that they were used as text-books and school writing-exercises. They were discovered in the Prisse Papyrus, a roll twenty-three feet seven inches long by five and seven-eighth inches broad, preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris. Its date is about 3550 B.C., and it contains two works:—

1. The Instructions of Ke'gemni, dating from the end of the reign of Heuni, the last Pharaoh of the Third Dynasty (about 3998 B.C.).

2. The Instructions, to his son, of Ptah-hôtep, who lived in the time of Assa, the last King but one of the Fifth Dynasty, who reigned from 3580–36 B.C.

Nothing is known as to the lives of these two men, but the following extracts will serve to show the nature of their writings:—

Ke'gemni:

"The cautious man flourisheth, the exact one is

praised ; the innermost chamber openeth unto the man of silence. Comfortable is the seat of the man gentle of speech."

"Gluttony is an abomination : therein is the quality of the beast.....A base man is he that is governed by his belly ; he departeth only when he is no longer able to fill full his belly in men's houses."

"If a man be lacking in good fellowship, no speech hath any influence over him. He is sour of face towards the glad-hearted that are kindly to him ; he is a grief unto his mother and his friends."

"Beware of making strife, for one knoweth not the things which the God will do when He punisheth."

Ptah-hôtep :

"Be not proud because thou art learned, but discourse with the ignorant man as with the sage."

"If thou be a leader, as one directing the conduct of the multitude, endeavour always to be gracious, that thine own conduct be without defect."

"Cause no fear among men ; for [this] the God punisheth....."

"If thou be lowly, serve a wise man, that all thine actions may be good before the God."

"If thou desire that thine actions may be good, save thyself from all malice, and beware of the quality of covetousness."

"Quarrelling in place of friendship is a foolish thing."

"Excellent in hearing, excellent in speaking, is every man that obeyeth what is noble ; and the obedience of an obeyer is a noble thing."

"Obedience is better than all things that are ; it maketh goodwill."

"He that obeyeth becometh one obeyed."

"Take not any word away, neither add one ; set not one in the place of another."

"Forsooth, a good son is of the gift of the God ; he

doeth more than is enjoined on him, he doeth right, and putteth his heart into all his goings."

But of all that has come down to modern times of the lore of Egypt none is more edifying than the life and teachings of Akh-na-ten, the Reformer-king, of whose life a considerable amount is known despite the endeavours of the powerful priesthood of the god Amun to blot out his records. Of this Pharaoh Professor Flinders Petrie¹ has said: "How much Akh-na-ten understood we cannot say, but he had certainly bounded forward in his views and symbolism to a position which we cannot logically improve upon at the present day." Only twenty-eight years old when he died, he was "the first of all human founders of religious doctrines—the world's first idealist" (Weigall).

Akh-na-ten was the son of Amun-hôtep III and Queen Thi, and grandson of Thothmes IV. Born 1386 B.C., and called Amun-hôtep after his father, he was a delicate boy, with a misshapen skull, and suffered from fits, probably of an epileptic character. His father married him early to a daughter of the King of Mitänni, a buffer-state between the Pharaoh's Syrian possessions and the lands of the Hittites and Mesopotamians. The girl was between eight and nine years old, and her name, Tadukhipa, was changed to Nefertiti. Young people mature early in the East, and their first child was born about five years later.

Amun-hôtep III died in 1375, and his son ascended the throne, when about ten or eleven years old, as the fourth of his name; his mother, Queen Thi, acting as regent. He reigned only seventeen years, during which he founded his new religion, first exalting the worship of the sun-god Ra under the name of Aten and then elaborating it into an essentially monotheistic cult. He broke with the priesthood of Amun, and abandoned the

¹ *History of Egypt.*

city of Thebes to found a new one close to Tel-el-Amarna, some hundred and sixty miles above the modern Cairo. This city he called Khut-Aten, "The City of the Horizon of Aten," and took up his residence there in the nineteenth year of his age and the eighth of his reign. His original name, Amun-hôtep (meaning "The Peace of Amun"), thus becoming singularly inappropriate, he changed it for Akh-na-ten (or Khu-en-aten)—i.e., "The Glory of Aten."

The religion of Aten which Akh-na-ten formulated has been thus spoken of by Petrie: "No such grand theology had ever appeared in the world before, so far as we know; and it is the forerunner of the later monotheistic religions." Aten was originally the actual sun's disc. Akh-na-ten's conception of the god was as the power which created the sun, the energy which penetrated to the earth in the sun's heat and caused all things to grow. The hymn to Aten which the Reformer-king composed bears a striking resemblance to *Psalms* civ, as will be seen by the following brief extract:—

Akh-na-ten's Hymn.

"How manifold are all thy works!—Thou didst create the earth according to thy desire—men, all cattle—all that are upon the earth."

"Thou makest the seasons.—Thou hast made the distant heaven in order to rise therein—dawning, shining afar off, and returning."

"The world is in thy hand, even as Thou hast made them. When Thou hast risen, they live; when Thou settest, they die.—By Thee man liveth."

Psalms civ.

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy creations."

"He appointed the moon for certain seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down."

"These wait all upon Thee. When Thou givest them [food] they gather it; and when Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good. When Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled. When Thou takest away their breath they die."

Akh-na-ten lived up to the purity of his creed, and, being a reformer who, did he live in modern times, would be accounted as in advance of his age, fell in consequence. In the last two years of his reign came a Hittite invasion of the Egyptian possessions in Syria, and Akh-na-ten had conscientious objections to warfare. Unfortunately, ideals are not of much value in the government of empires when surrounding nations are not similarly imbued; there were secessions among his tributaries, and the fighting in Syria became general. Akh-na-ten refused help, and Egypt lost her Syrian territory; his health, never robust, gave way, and he died in 1358 B.C.¹ with the fall of his Empire. His cult of Aten went with him; he left a family of girls, but no son to carry on his ideals. The court of his successor, Heru-em-heb, returned to Thebes. Akh-na-ten's new city was destroyed, and, by the irony of fate, its stones were rebuilt into the temple of Amun. His memory was persecuted, his name obliterated from the monuments, and the priesthood, as is usual in such cases, prevailed. But the bones of Akh-na-ten (which were discovered at Thebes in 1907) still exist, and his memory will be honoured as the first man to give the world a religion of ideals and to act up to them. The priests of Amun who sought to blot out his memory are forgotten.

§ 3. *Chaldæa and Hammurabi*

Mention has already been made of the Code of Hammurabi and its bearing upon the laws ascribed to Moses (p. 68). Hammurabi was an historical personage who lived about 2000 B.C., and is fully entitled to rank as one of the world's great teachers. He united the Babylonian States under one rule, and gave to his subjects the celebrated code of laws known by his name. These are inscribed upon a basalt pillar, discovered at Susa in 1901, and now in the Louvre. This monument is the original

¹ The dates given follow those of Weigall. See Bibliography.

code, and the laws upon it are far-reaching and precise, covering the whole field of life as then existing. Comparison with the laws affecting civil life contained in the Pentateuch proves beyond a doubt that these were derived from the Code of Hammurabi; and this, with the evidence existing that the code must have been known in Canaan as early as 1400 B.C., completely disposes of the reputation of Moses as a law-giver.¹

There is no need to give many extracts here from the Code of Hammurabi, but the following may be taken as specimens of its wise and just nature:—

“If a man has struck another man in a dispute and wounded him, that man shall swear: ‘I did not strike him knowingly’; and he shall pay for the doctor.”

“If a man has given his goods on deposit, and in the place of deposit, either by breaking in or by climbing over, anything has been lost, together with the property of the householder, then the householder in question shall make good all that was deposited with him and lost, and shall restore it to the owner. The householder shall pursue his stolen goods, and recover from the thief.”

§ 4. *India—Brahmanism*

The present population of India is about 315,000,000, the religion of three-fourths of which is Hinduism, or Brahmanism. This faith is a remarkable labyrinth of temples, shrines, deities both male and female, and rituals of praise and prayer, the result of the growth of centuries from the primitive religion of the Aryan invaders of India, mixed with Animism. It is unique among the great religious systems of the world in that it had no personal founder or hard-and-fast creed. From it sprang Zoroastrianism and Buddhism, faiths to be considered later.

It would be beside the purpose of this book to attempt

¹ Chilperic Edwards, *The Old Testament*, p. 73.

an enumeration of the multitude of deities of all grades that form its varied pantheon, and the reader is referred to other works upon the subject.¹ One divinity must, however, be mentioned in Krishna, a solar-deity from whose cult, far more ancient than Christianity, much myth material has been assimilated by the latter.² Like most other great religions, Brahmanism has its Trinity, comprising Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer.

The sacred books of the Hindus are the *Vedas*, to which reference has already been made (p. 69), and the name of which means "knowledge," or "science," akin to our word "wisdom." These books contain over a thousand hymns of great beauty, which are believed to have been composed some 2,400 years before the Christian Era. As in all other great religions, the *Vedas* are venerated as "inspired," the Brahmins believing them to be entirely the work of God.

The following extracts will give the reader some idea of their beauty:—

"In the beginning there arose the source of golden light."

"He who gives life, He who gives strength; whose blessing all the bright gods desire; whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death."

"He through whom the heaven was established—nay, the highest heaven; He who measured out the light in the air."

"Purity of body comes by water; purity of mind by truthfulness. The lamp of truth is a lamp of the wise."

"Let him not do evil to others who desires not that sorrows should pursue himself" (The Golden Rule).

¹ An excellent short sketch will be found in E. Clodd's *Childhood of Religions*.

² J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*.

From the hymn to Varuna :—

“If a man stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or to get up, what two people sitting together whisper, King Varuna knows it; he is there as the third.”

“He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna the King. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world; with thousand eyes they overlook this earth.”

These passages may be compared with *Psalms* cxxxix, 3, 7-12.

The following are from prayers beseeching pardon from sin :—

“Do not deliver us unto death, nor to the blow of the furious, nor to the wrath of the spiteful !”

“Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which we have committed with our own bodies.”

“Through want of strength, thou strong and bright god, have I gone wrong; have mercy, almighty, have mercy.”

“Whenever we men, O Varuna ! commit an offence before the heavenly host, whenever we break the law through thoughtlessness; punish us not, O God, for that offence.”

§ 5. *India—Buddhism*

Buddhism claims more devotees than any other faith, if, indeed, what is a philosophy of life rather than a religion can be called a faith.

The exact origin of Buddhism is difficult to trace, but it probably began in a slowly growing revolt against the heavy burdens which Brahmanism laid upon its adherents—the call for something simpler and easier to understand; just as Protestantism grew from the Mediæval Church and the later Dissenters from the Church of England. The reputed beginning of Buddhism was, however, briefly as follows :—

Its founder was a young man of princely descent, born

at Kapilavasti, north of Oudh, between 560 and 557 B.C., the date of his birth being as uncertain as that of Jesus. His tribal name was *Gautama*, and he received that of *Siddârtha*, meaning "He in whom wishes are fulfilled," from his father Suddhodana. His other name, or rather title, The Buddha—i.e., "The Enlightened"—was not bestowed upon him until much later. As with other founders of great religious systems, a large number of legends grew up around his birth; for instance, it was said that the mystic Bô tree sprang from the ground, and that a venerable prophet¹ present at his birth predicted his wonderful career. Then "Maya is said to have conceived him after a dream in which she beheld the future Buddha descending from the heaven and entering her womb in the form of a white elephant,"² a guise singularly appropriate for the founder of a new religion.

The name of his mother, Maya, is a variant of that of Mary,³ which is found with such remarkable frequency among the mothers of saviour-gods (see p. 145). She died a few days after Gautama's birth, and he grew up under the care of his aunt, Prajapati. Although ever a serious youth, prone to meditation and contemplation, he could apparently hold his own in sports and games of skill. His father, fearing that he would develop into an unpractical dreamer unfit to succeed him, married him, when not more than nineteen years old, to Yasodhara, a princess of great beauty. He lived happily with his wife, but still showed a preference for contemplating the futility of existence and the means of liberating the world from woe. Every attempt was made to divert him from his serious methods of thought; but, according to tradition, a god appeared to him in four successive guises—a feeble old man, a stern tyrant, a dead body, and a

¹ Compare *Simeon* in the birth-story of Jesus.

² Geden; art. Buddha, *Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 881.

³ J. M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 297.

reverend hermit. The birth of his son Kahula, ten years after marriage, seemed to him a new bond to chain him to the world, and he determined to fly from his home. At dead of night he stole away from wife and child and repaired to Rajagriha, where he joined certain holy hermits. Their Brahman teachings, however, failed to satisfy his craving, and he retired to a small village, where he gained some reputation for sanctity and lived with five disciples for six years, surpassing them in the severity of his penances. But so selfish and inactive a life brought Gautama no satisfaction, and he reverted to a more cheerful method of existence, although without relinquishing his habits of deep thought and contemplation. At last, as he sat beneath the shade of a spreading tree, there came enlightenment, and he found suddenly that he was a "Buddha."

At the time he left his wife, Gautama was met, according to legend, by a tempter, who offered him the sovereignty over all kingdoms of the earth if he would not leave his home. Now, when enlightenment had come, he was again assailed by the tempter, after he had fasted for forty-nine days and nights. He gained the victory by means of the ten great virtues of Buddha. The reader can scarcely help noting the strong myth-parallel in the story of Jesus, the writers of which, as Buddhism was some six hundred years older, probably borrowed it therefrom together with the items of the Krishna myth already mentioned.

After the crisis, the Buddha is said to have founded his great cult. He first preached at the Holy City of Benares, meeting with much opposition from the Brahmans. Undeterred, however, he made many converts, and finally died in peace, as he sat under a tree, in his eighty-fifth year (480-77 B.C.).¹

¹ The date appears to be uncertain. Some authorities give Buddha's life as from 628 to 543.

Shortly after the Buddha's death a general council of his disciples is said to have been held to determine the rules and doctrines of the cult. Two later councils are also reported for the correction of errors and the sending out of missionaries, the last being held (according to tradition) in 251 B.C.

Such is the legend of the founder of Buddhism. Like the biographies of similar persons, it has become surrounded by a thick crust of myth. A large part of this myth comes from Krishna sources, or even earlier, the lore of Krishna being prehistoric. The Buddha was deified, and his cult therefore became corrupt, much being added to his teaching which it is admitted he never taught. As a matter of fact, his movement was atheistic, for he is reported to have said: "There may be a future world, but we know nothing concerning it. Do not waste time over gods, but build in love—a love like that of a mother for her child."¹

¹ The most complete information concerning Gautama Buddha is to be found in the works of Rhys Davids, *Buddhism* and *General Introduction to the Buddhist Sūtras* (vol. xi of "Sacred Books of the East" Series). It must be mentioned that the historicity of the Buddha has been questioned, partly upon the ground of the myths surrounding him and their similarity to those round other religious figures, partly because (1) Buddha wrote nothing; (2) none of his disciples or contemporaries wrote anything; (3) some of the Buddhist doctrines are suspected as fictitious, and others are admitted to be literary creations; and (4) much of the teaching put into Buddha's mouth is of a nature known to be current before his period. Societies such as Buddha formed were in existence before him, and the very title of Buddha (= the Enlightened) was rather an acknowledgment of continuance in established ideals than a claim to something new. The great Buddhist doctrines are the Four Noble Truths (1, that pain exists; 2, that it is due to desire; 3, pain and desire can be ended by "Nirvana"; and 4, Buddha shows the right way to Nirvana) and the Noble Eightfold Path—viz., 1, Right Views; 2, Right Aspirations; 3, Right Speech; 4, Right Conduct; 5, Right Livelihood; 6, Right Effort; 7, Right Mindedness; 8, Right Rapture. These doctrines are simply a statement of the rules of self-repression by which the disciple can attain inward peace ("Nirvana"), or deliverance from blind desires. They "were not only the teaching of Gautama himself, but were the central and most essential part of it" (Rhys Davids, *General Introduction*, etc., p. xxi), and were current *before his time*. According to Rhys Davids (*Buddhism*, pp. 214–21), Buddha is always used in the Pāli and Sanskrit texts "as a title and not a name," and Gautama "is represented to have taught that he was only one of a long series of Buddhas who appear at intervals in the

It was in the reign of Asoka (264–27 B.C.) that Buddhism became really historical. He acted towards the cult as did Constantine towards Christianity (see p. 156), possibly not without political reasons, since he was the grandson of Chandragupta, who drove the Greek power from India and himself began as a robber chief in the time of Alexander. Both he and his followers were men of low caste, and it is possible therefore that Asoka favoured Buddhism because it was an organization which, while deprecating caste, was not in direct opposition to Brahmanism, and offered a middle course which pleased the men of low caste without offending the priesthood.

The sacred writings of Buddhism are the *Tripitaka*, or “Three Baskets,” written in Pāli, an ancient dialect whose relation to the Sanskrit of the Vedas is as that of Italian to Latin. The three parts deal, the first with rules of discipline, the second with the discourses of Buddha, and the third with doctrinal matters. The following are examples of the precepts contained in this ancient scripture:—

“Conquer anger by mildness, evil by good, falsehood by truth.”

“Be not desirous of discovering the faults of others, but zealously guard against your own.”

“To the virtuous all is pure. Therefore think not that going unclothed, fasting, or lying on the ground can make the impure pure, for the mind will still remain the same.”

“To be pure, temperate, to persevere in good deeds: these are excellences.”

“The gem of the sky is the sun; the gem of the house

world, and who *all teach the same system*.” The names of twenty-four Buddhas have been handed down as appearing previous to Gautama. Much of the doctrine ascribed to the latter was built up long after his time. It may be that the sect appeared first, and the story of its founder was made later as a “Myth of Doctrine.”

is the child ; in the assembly shines the brow of the wise man."

"He is a more noble warrior who subdues himself than he who in battle conquers thousands." This may be compared with *Proverbs* xvi, 32: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

§ 6. *Persia—Zarathustra*

Of Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, the reputed founder of the religion of the Pârsîs, there is no single trustworthy biographical detail ; Greek, Roman, and Persian legends there are in plenty, but they contain mere myth and miracle. Indeed, there has been some dispute as to his historicity, and those who have contended for his existence rely upon the support of tradition alone and the probability that a personal influence lay behind the development of the noble religion which is known by his name. In the oldest portion of the Zend-Avesta, known as the Gâthâs, Zarathustra appears as a simple individual, while in the later Avesta his personality is completely shrouded in myth.

Zarathustra is stated to have been born in Bactria, at what date is uncertain. He died, according to the best authorities, about 583 B.C. His name indicates that he was a priest attending on the sacred fire, which possibly indicates that Zarathustra was not so much a person as the title of a kind of king-priest. It is said that he retired as a young man to spend years of contemplation, that he began to teach at the age of thirty, and that he lived to the age of seventy-seven.

His religion was certainly founded before the conquest of Bactria by the Assyrians. Its teaching is based upon the dual conception of a good principle, personified as Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), in constant conflict with an evil principle in the person of Aura Mainyu (Ahriman),

which contest must continue until the end of the world, when evil will be finally overcome. Zarathustra's doctrine was the essence of practical ethics: not in abstract contemplation or in separation from the world can man look for spiritual deliverance, but in active charity, in useful deeds, in kindness to animals, in everything that tends to make the world a well-ordered place to live in, in courage, and all uprightness. Than such a creed there can be nothing nobler or more uplifting.

The Jews came in contact with Zoroastrianism at the period of the Exile, and from it obtained the ideas of a future life and of a personified principle of evil. From the latter was evolved the conception of Satan.

The teachings of Zarathustra are preserved in the Zend-Avesta, the authorship of which is ascribed to him. It is believed that its contents were revealed to him by the God in conversations. The following are extracts:—

“Now I shall proclaim to all who have come to listen, the praises of thee, the all-wise Lord, and the hymns of the good Spirit.”

“Hear with your ears what is best, perceive with your mind what is pure, so that every man may for himself choose his tenets before the great doom. May the wise be on our side!”

“Those old spirits who are twins made known what is good and what is evil in thoughts, words, and deeds. Those who are good distinguished between the two, not those who are evil-doers.”

“Let us, then, be of those who further this world: oh, Ahuramazdâ; oh, bliss-conferring Asha! (truth). Let our mind be there where wisdom abides.”

“Purity is for man, next to life the greatest good. That purity is procured by the law of Mazda to him who cleanses his own self with Good Thoughts, Words, and Deeds.”

“Thou shouldest not become presumptuous through any happiness of the world, for the happiness of the

world is such like as a cloud that comes on a rainy day, which one does not ward off by any hill."

§ 7. *China—Lao-Tsze and Kung-Foo-Tsze*

It has already been mentioned (p. 68) that the myriads of China have three systems, none of which can be strictly called religions. They are Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Taoism was founded by Lao-Tsze, but has little credit now among Chinese. Its priesthood is very ignorant, it has become a chaotic mixture of magic and animism, and, as might be expected when the evolution of religious ideas is borne in mind, is the creed only of the uneducated.

Lao-Tsze ("The Venerable Master") lived between 500 and 600 B.C., and was a noted sage of China. A great thinker, he contemplated, like Buddha, the futility of human life and the best way to cope with it. He was rather a didactic moralist than an active reformer. According to tradition, Kung-Foo-Tsze (Confucius) visited him, and does not appear either to have understood him or to have been received with the courtesy or humility upon which the older sage was so insistent in his teaching. His sayings, which formed the nucleus of Taoism, were called the *Tao* (meaning "The Way," or "Reason"—i.e., identical with the "Logos"), and contained much that was current long before his time. To those who hold that humility is essentially a Christian teaching, it may be interesting to note that Lao-Tsze cites "that ancient saying, 'He that humbles himself shall be preserved entire,'" and adds: "Oh, it is no vain saying." He seems, however, to have preached rather than practised this virtue.

The following passages from Lao-Tsze's teachings are worth quotation as being current in ancient civilization long before the New Testament was compiled:—

"He who is self-displaying does not shine."

"He who is self-approving is not held in esteem."

"He who is self-praising has no merit."

"He who is self-exalting does not stand high."

"I have three precious things which I hold fast and praise. The first is called compassion, the second is called economy, and the third is called humility."

"When in the world beauty is recognized to be beautiful, straightway there is ugliness. When in the world goodness is recognized to be good, straightway there is evil."

"The good I would meet with goodness. The not-good I would also meet with goodness. Virtue is *good*."

"The faithful I would meet with faith. The not-faithful I would also meet with faith. Virtue is *faithful*."

"Recompense injury with virtue (kindness)."

In point of fact, the teachings of Lao-Tsze, being merely passive, were overshadowed by those of Kung-Foo-Tsze ("Kung the Master"), the great teacher and law-giver of the Chinese. Better known to Western learning by his Latinized name of *Confucius*, this truly great man was never deified, and his teachings have therefore never suffered from the corrupting influence of a priesthood, although, as will be seen, a certain amount of myth has been introduced around his birth. His memory is venerated as that of a man of great and pure mind and integrity; his descendants are honoured, and his precepts hold a prominent place in Chinese education, being learned by heart.

Confucius was born 551 B.C. His father dying in 548, he was carefully trained by his mother, and early displayed a love for learning, laws, and country. Owing to the general disorder and corruption of public affairs in his time, he resigned the offices he held and became a public teacher, giving instruction in morality and living up to the ideals he taught. When fifty years old he returned to public life and became a Minister of State, ruling with wisdom and success until the corruption of

the court forced him again to resign. In poverty he wandered, unheeded or reviled, and devoted his remaining years to editing and adding to the Chinese sacred books (see p. 69). He died about 478 B.C., in the seventy-third year of his age.

His teachings are ethical; he did not pretend to any knowledge of God or a future life, saying to a disciple: "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?" His whole endeavour was to teach his fellow men *how to live*.

A certain amount of myth grew up later concerning Confucius. The cave-birth idea, so frequent in mythology, was grafted on to his biography, and it was stated that his mother, in obedience to a vision, went to a cave in Mount Ne, where she gave him birth; that genii had announced to her the honour her son would bring her; that the events were heralded by miraculous portents; and that fairies attended his nativity.¹

The sayings of Confucius contain the highest conceptions of ethic; they are essentially rationalist and humanist. There can be no better definition of the Golden Rule than:—

"Tsze-Kung asked, saying, Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life? The Master said, Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

Confucius accepted religion as a convention, but not as a guide to conduct:—

"Ke Loo asked about serving spirits of the dead. The Master said: While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve spirits?"

His rationalism is shown by the following:—

"When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to acknowledge that you do not know it—this is knowledge."

¹ Douglas, *Confucianism*, p. 25.

Other notable sayings are :—

“To see what is right, and not to do it, is want of courage.”

“Pursue the study of virtue as though you could never reach your goal, and were afraid of losing the ground already gained.”

“The real fault is to have faults and not try to amend them.”

§ 8. *The Wisdom of Ancient Greece*

To contemplate the wisdom of Ancient Greece is to wonder how men could have been so foolish as to permit so much knowledge to be lost during the Dark Ages, and to speculate upon what might have been had the pursuit of science not have been interrupted by that miserable period.

The history of Greek philosophy is of enthralling interest, for it shows of what the human mind is capable when unfettered by a powerful class whose interest it is to keep it in subjection. It must, therefore, be given in some detail. Philosophic¹ speculation flourished because, while the Greek religion (which was Animistic) possessed plenty of priests, it had no powerful priestly class “accustomed,” as Benn² remarks, “to identify the truth of their opinions about the gods with the preservation of their corporate property.” The systematic Greek mythology was, therefore, chiefly the creation of the poets, and its gods were nature-gods. Further, as Professor Bury has said,³ “the Greeks, fortunately, had no Bible.”

During the first half of the sixth century B.C. the Greeks were largely rationalistic, and their commerce brought them into close contact with the great Oriental civilizations, which necessarily enlarged their sphere of thought and prevented intellectual stagnation. Their intelligence being of a high order and untrammelled by

¹ A philosopher is one who studies nature ; a scholar one who studies history and literature.

² *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 6. ³ *History of Freedom of Thought*, p. 24.

either a powerful priesthood or a sacred "inspired" scripture, they picked the useful in Oriental science out of its bed of superstition. The stimulus which started their speculations seems to have come from Egypt.

The Greek philosophy originated in the early sixth century among the Ionians; and *Thales*, of Miletus, was its founder. The school thus inaugurated was called the "Milesian," after his native city. The Ionians were the most intellectual of the whole Hellenic race, and had early evolved a religious scepticism, substituting for the superstitious teaching which had hitherto prevailed a serious scientific explanation of the world. Thales taught that water was the fundamental element, from which all things came; a conception not so far from the truth, since it has been shown that it was in water that life first began. He wrote nothing, but certain of his sayings have been preserved, among which is that "All things are full of gods"—meaning that everything belonged to the realm of Nature. *Anaximander*, a pupil of Thales, born 610 B.C., wrote a book of which fragments remain. Discarding the water theory, he taught that the primary substance was an indefinite something, without limit in space or time. He made the first map, and conceived the earth as hanging unsupported in space. In his saying that land animals were originally developed from aquatic creatures, and that "man was born from animals of a different species" (because, while other animals quickly find food for themselves, man alone requires a prolonged period of suckling; hence, had he been originally such as he is now, he could never have survived"), he foreshadowed the doctrine of Evolution. His successor was *Anaximenes*, who taught that the elementary substance was air: "that which is our soul and constitutive principle also holds the universe together." In his explanations he was often in error; but, as Benn¹

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 23.

points out, "to ask questions and answer them wrongly helps progress incomparably more than not to ask them at all."

After the third generation, the Milesian philosophy came to an end in the religious revival which occurred; but the colonizing tendency of the Ionians spread philosophy and multiplied intellectual centres elsewhere. To appreciate this religious revival it must be realized that the Greeks had two systems of religion: the Olympian, whose gods were associated with the sun and sky, the mythology developed by the poets; and the Chthonian, which comprised the earth gods, with their chief, Pluto, and the vegetation gods. From the latter came the belief in an underworld, a dying, redeeming god, and human immortality, with its conception of future rewards and punishments. The causes of the great religious movement which began in the sixth century were two: the terror and feeling of insecurity due to the wave of Persian conquest, and the growth of democracy, which gave new prominence to popular faiths. Again to quote Benn¹: "It is a common experience to find the belief in another world utilized by a particular class to further their own interests by working on the superstitious imagination of the vulgar; and such seems to have been also the case in Greece." To this movement has been given the name "Orphicism," after the mythical Orpheus, embodying the worship of a dying god and the hope of a blessed hereafter.

Between the Milesian philosophy and the religious revival *Pythagoras*, who lived during the greater part of the sixth century, came as a connecting link. With him began the Metaphysicians. Pythagoras was born at Samos, and he associated the Orphic belief in immortality with the old Oriental doctrine of "Metempsychosis," or reincarnation, in which each incarnation of the soul

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 28.

depended upon its purity. He also seems to have started the speculation which resulted, two or three centuries later, in the theory that the earth revolves on its own axis and is itself carried round the sun as a central body—a theory to be revived by Copernicus (1473–1543 C.E.) from Greek science.

With *Heracleitus* of Ephesus, at the end of the sixth century, came the separation of philosophy from science in the strict sense. Following the Milesian method, he sought for a universal principle, and this he assumed to be fire, which lives by struggling with and assimilating its own opposites, perishing at the moment of its complete triumph. Thus everything is for ever flowing, and everything is relative. "Health, goodness, satiety, and rest are made pleasant by sickness, evil, hunger, and fatigue." From his doctrine of fire as the universal principle and his dogma of relativity, Heracleitus evolved his third and greatest idea—that of universal law and order. This he called the "Logos," or reason. It is the same "Logos" as that which we encountered in the Christian faith—the "Logos" of the fourth Gospel, incarnate in Jesus. John probably derived it from Philo of Alexandria, who obtained it from the Stoics, who in turn derived it from Heracleitus.

Other sayings of Heracleitus are :—

"Eyes and Ears are bad witnesses to men if they have souls that understand not their language."

"Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things."

"Men pray to images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heroes are."

Mention must be made of *Xenophanes*, the Ionian poet-philosopher, who believed in an infinite source of existence which he identified with the earth; and of *Parmenides* of Elea, an Ionian colony in Southern Italy (early fifth century), who recognized the earth to be a sphere, and exercised a great influence over Greek thought. He

considered the whole of being as one uniform, unchangeable, limited, luminous sphere, without parts, beginning, or end :—

“The whole extends continuously,
Being by Being set, immovable,
Subject to the restraint of mighty bonds,
Both increate and indestructible,
Since birth and death have wandered far away,
By true conviction into exile driven.
The same in self-same place and by itself
Abiding doth abide most firmly fixed,
And bounded round by strong Necessity.
Wherefore a holy law forbids that Being
Should be without a bound, else want were these,
And want of that would be a want of all.”

The only disciple of Parmenides was *Zeno* of Elea, who endeavoured to support his master's denial of motion by such arguments as the famous puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise. With him began the Analytical Philosophers, among whom were the following :—

Empedocles of Acragas, in Sicily, an original and progressive thinker. He flourished about 444 B.C. He divined the velocity of light, centrifugal and centripetal force, and the non-survival of the unfit, and recognized the sexual reproduction of plants. Among his sayings are :—

“Blessed is the man who has gained the riches of divine wisdom.”

“By Love do we see Love, and Hate by grievous Hate.”

Melissus (440 B.C.), who wrote a treatise reproducing and varying the main ideas of Parmenides.

Leucippus, the real founder of the atomic theory, who said : “Nothing happens by chance, everything by law and necessity.”

Democritus, who adopted the atomic theory of Leu-

cippus and explained theology as a primitive personification of natural objects. He declared the highest end to be a contented mind, and that sins are to be avoided not from fear, but from a sense of duty.

Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ (born 500 B.C.), who was a link between the earlier schools and those of Athens. He taught that the sun was a red-hot mass of stone, and that the moon was an earthy body shining by reflected light. At Athens, however, speculative freedom was not so complete as elsewhere in Greece, and, as sun and moon were deities, Anaxagoras had to fly the city.

In ancient Athens education was free, and every citizen was taught to read. The Athenians were placed in the enviable position of having no lawyers, every one pleading his own cause. Philosophy and rhetoric therefore formed the higher education of the citizens, and the demand for this called into existence the teachers known as "Sophists." The first and most famous of these was *Protagoras* (480-411 B.C.), a great and original thinker. He first discovered the doctrine of human development. To him morality was the very foundation of human life, and punishment was justified as a moralizing agency. Two of his best known sayings are :—

"As to the gods, I do not know whether they exist or not. Life is too short for such difficult inquiries."

"Man is the measure of all things, determining what does and what does not exist."

Among other teachers at Athens were :—

Hippias the Naturalist, who set a high value upon truth as a virtue.

Prodicus, who explained the animistic origin of religion.

Both Hippias and Prodicus taught that nature was the source of law, the contrary of which was held by another great Sophist,

Gorgias, the Anti-Naturalist, who tried to show that nature did not exist, and taught that virtue is relative to the age and social position of the person concerned.

Alcidamas, who taught, with reverence for human law, the abolition of slavery, saying: "God sent all men to be free; Nature made none a slave."

These names bring us to one of the greatest of Greek minds,

Socrates, born near Athens in 469 B.C. In his youth he followed the calling of his father Sophroniscus, a statuary. Healthy and robust, but ugly of face, he possessed great physical endurance and strong moral courage. He was a member of the Senate in 406, but most of his middle and late life was self-devoted to teaching, and he endeavoured to awaken the moral consciousness of men and the impulse after knowledge respecting the end and value of actions. He was not, however, a Sophist. He fought steadfastly against false appearance and conceit of knowledge, and was therefore attacked by Aristophanes and other comic writers. Keeping clear of political parties, he was suspected and persecuted in consequence by all. Falsely accused of corrupting youth and despising the gods, he made a defence the substance of which has been preserved by his disciple Plato. Condemned to death, he drank the poison draught of hemlock, and died with composure and cheerfulness in the seventieth year of his age (399 B.C.). Socrates laid the foundation of formal logic:—

"Know thyself."

"To him who has an eye to see there can be no fairer sight than that of a man who combines moral beauty of soul with outward beauty of form."

"You should be to others what you think I should be to you" (the Golden Rule again).

"This is most excellent, and will ever continue to be said, that whatever is useful is honourable, and whatever is hurtful is worthless."

This brief sketch of the wisdom of ancient Greece may be concluded with three other great names.

Plato, born at Athens 429 B.C., was an ardent admirer

and follower of Socrates. After the latter's death he withdrew to Megara, and travelled in the pursuit of knowledge. Returning later to Athens, he taught there, and wrote many works on philosophy of great purity of language and elegance of style. He died 347.

"In every man there are two parts: the better and superior part, which rules, and the worse and inferior part, which serves; and the ruler is always to be preferred to the servant."

"The temperate man is the friend of God, for he is like to him."

Aristotle was born at Stagira in 384 B.C., and studied at Athens under Plato. After the death of his teacher twenty years later, he left Athens, and became, by the wish of Philip of Macedon, instructor to Alexander. In such estimation did Philip hold him that at Aristotle's request he rebuilt the city of his birth. In 335 he returned to Athens and taught philosophy in the Lyceum, dying in 322 in his sixty-third year. Here are two of his sayings:—

"In justice are comprehended all the virtues."

"The worst man is he who works evil as regards both himself and others; the best is he who works good not only for himself, but for others—truly a hard task."

Callimachus, born at Cyrene, was a prolific writer of philosophy, and his works had a great influence. From 260 to his death in 240 he was chief librarian at the famous library at Alexandria, where he numbered many distinguished men among his pupils, including Eratosthenes, who succeeded to his office.

"Not to every one doth Apollo manifest himself, but only to the good."

§ 9. *The Wisdom of Ancient Rome*

If Greece was eminently ideal in her worship of beauty, Rome was eminently practical in her love of law and

order. But in her later development the direction of thought of her citizens was largely moulded by Greek influence. The following have been selected as representative of her most famous writers:—

Cicero, the great orator, was born near Arpinum in 106 B.C. He received the best possible education in Rome, under the most noted men, and became a pleader in the forum. In 79, having offended Sulla, he went for two years to Athens, and on his return he gained the highest distinction as an orator and held many important offices. He became Consul in 63. Having no sympathy with the popular party, he allied himself to the aristocracy, and, by his prudence and energy, the conspiracy of Cataline was crushed, for which he received great honour. But by his opposition to the popular party he lost support, and when Cæsar, Pompey, and Crassus formed the Triumvirate, again retired to Greece. He then became involved in the civil war between Cæsar and Pompey, espousing the losing cause of the latter, for which Cæsar pardoned him. When the great Cæsar was assassinated, Cicero attacked Mark Anthony, and so ruined himself. He was proscribed and beheaded in 43, at the age of sixty-three. As a statesman he was weak, changeful, and vain; but as an author he shone for eloquence and perfect Latin.

“The unruly passions of anger and desire are contrary and inimical to reason.”

“Pythagoras thought that there was a soul mingling with and pervading all things.”

“My own conscience is of more importance to me than what men say.”

“Nature ordains that a man should wish the good of every man, whoever he may be, and for this very reason—that he is a man.”

Lucretius, a contemporary of Cæsar and Cicero, was born 99 B.C., and died in his forty-fourth year. Very little is known of his life, and he probably took no part

in public affairs, preferring study and retirement. By tradition he is alleged to have suffered from fits of insanity, and to have committed suicide. His name is immortalized by his (unfinished) poem, *De Rerum Natura*, written to extol the Epicurean system of philosophy, which taught that virtue should be practised because it leads to happiness, in contradistinction to the Stoics, who insisted that it should be cultivated for its own sake.

“Apply to true reason unbusied ears and a keen mind withdrawn from cares.”

“But this I charge thee: Suffer not the thought that Reason’s creed will lure thee impiously to the steep path of sin.”

“Wilt thou hesitate and think it a hardship to die—thou for whom life is well nigh dead while yet thou livest and seest the light.....when.....thou art sore pressed on all sides with full many cares?”

“So invariably is truth found to make head against false reason and to cut off all retreat from the assailant, and by a two-fold refutation to put falsehood to rout.”

“Violence and wrong enclose all who commit them in their meshes, and do mostly recoil on him from whom they began.”

“For nothing is harder than to separate manifest facts from doubtful, which the mind without hesitation adds on of itself.”

Seneca was born at Cordova in 3 B.C., the son of Seneca the rhetorician, himself a writer. He was weak in body but studious of mind. He became a pleader, and by his ability excited the hatred of the Emperor Caligula, so that he was banished to Corsica, where he remained for eight years. Recalled to Rome, he was appointed prætor and tutor to the young Domitius. When the latter became the odious Emperor Nero, Seneca remained his adviser, and did his best to check his excesses. Seeing that he was becoming irksome to Nero, who coveted the wealth that he had amassed, he asked leave to retire.

This was granted, and for a time Seneca lived in seclusion. In 65 C.E., however, Nero ordered his death; he opened his veins, but, death not coming quickly enough, he was finally suffocated in a vapour stove, expiring with the courage of a Stoic. He wrote much upon moral, physical, and philosophical questions. The similarity of his trend of thought to that of the writer of the Pauline Epistles has already been noted (p. 185).

"He who means to do an injury has already done it."¹

"It is enough for God that he be worshipped and loved."

"God comes to men: nay, what is closer, he comes into them."

"You must live for another if you wish to live for yourself."

"So live with men as if God saw you; so speak with God as if men heard you."

Epictetus (40-120 C.E.), a celebrated Stoic philosopher, was born in Phrygia, and was a freedman of Epaphroditus, himself the freedman of Nero. Very little is known of his life, but he was expelled from Rome by the Emperor Domitian, and retired to Nicopolis. He wrote nothing, but a short manual was compiled from his discourses by his pupil Arrian.

"Now, if virtue promises good fortune and tranquillity and happiness, certainly also the progress towards virtue is progress towards each of these things."

"Man, you ought not to be affected contrary to nature by the bad things of another. Pity him rather; drop this readiness to be offended and to hate."

"What ought not to be done, do not even think of doing."

"God is within you."

When asked how a man could grieve his enemy,

¹ Compare Shakespeare: "How oft the means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done."

Epictetus answered : “ By preparing himself to act in the noblest way.”

Ælian (Claudius *Ælianus*) flourished in the second century C.E., and wrote *Variae Historiæ* (or Miscellanies) and *De Natura Animalium* (or Natural History).

“ Not only is he who does evil bad, but also he who thinks to do evil.”

Marcus Aurelius, one of the finest men in thought and practice of any age, was born 121 C.E. His real name was M. Annius Verus, and he was of noble descent. His father, Annius Verus, held high offices in Rome, and his grandfather was thrice Consul. The latter adopted him when his parents died young. Fortunate in his upbringing, his fine character attracted the Emperor Hadrian, who said he was not Verus, but Verissimus—more truthful than his own name. His aunt Faustina was the wife of Antoninus Pius, afterwards Emperor, who adopted him, changed his name to M. Aurelius Antoninus, and betrothed him to his daughter Faustina. He placed him under able teachers, who trained him in the strict doctrine of the Stoic philosophy. His education was eminently adapted to ensure a sane mind in a healthy body. After becoming Consul in 140, and marrying in 145, he succeeded to the Imperial State on the death of Antoninus Pius in 161. Soon engaged in war with Parthia and several frontier tribes, he was obliged to make an unsatisfactory peace owing to the revolt of Cassius, whom he would have forgiven had that rebel not been assassinated. He had several children, but only one, the worthless and vile Commodus, survived him. He died in Pannonia in 180. Marcus Aurelius was a successful and capable soldier and a prudent and conscientious administrator, making laws to protect the weak and to lighten the lot of slaves, and endowing charitable institutions for the rearing and education of poor children. His “Golden Book” of Meditations contains many fine and noble thoughts:—

"Men exist for one another. Teach them then, or bear with them. Not to do likewise is the best revenge."

"No mere talk of what the good man should be. Be it."

"Never esteem anything as profitable which shall ever constrain thee either to break thy faith or to lose thy modesty."

"Let nothing be done rashly and at random, but all things according to the most exact and perfect rules of art."

"To desire things impossible is the part of a madman."

"That which is not good for the bee-hive cannot be good for the bee."

"The true joy of a man is to do that which properly belongs unto a man."

"Beget thyself by continual pains and endeavours to true liberty with charity, and true simplicity and modesty."

"He that is unjust is also impious."

"If it be not fitting, do it not. If it be not true, speak it not. Ever maintain thine own purpose and resolution free from all compulsion and necessity."

§ 10. *Mohammed and his Teaching*

Mohammed, the founder of Islam,¹ occupies an unique position among the founders of the great religions; he is known to be a real person, who made no claim to divinity, but merely acclaimed an already established God. Yet even he, who died less than thirteen centuries ago, has during that time received a coating of legend. Nearly all the facts of Mohammed's life are known, and it can be seen how in the course of the evolution which

¹ The meaning of *Islam* is "to be at rest"—i.e., submission to the will and commandments of God. *Moslem*, or *Muslim*, is derived from *Islam*, and signifies "a righteous man."

is inevitable to all creeds the religion which he proclaimed has been crusted over with myth and superstition.

Mohammed was born at Mecca in 571 C.E., of Abdallah and Amina. One of the myths that seem inseparable from the birth of such men solemnly states that the infant was taken from his mother's arms by angels who, carefully abstracting his heart from his breast, squeezed from it the black drop of sin which lurks in every descendant of the mythical Adam. Mohammed's father died when the child was but two months old, his mother when he was six, his grandfather Abdal Motaleb when he was nine; and he was brought up by his uncle Abu Taleb. He was a delicate lad, and is said to have been subject to epilepsy. This has been stigmatized by Gibbon¹ as "an absurd calumny of the Greeks," but certain passages in the prophet's life seem to support it. He was of a contemplative nature, and lived a simple life. When twenty-four years old he entered the service of Cadijah, a rich widow, whom he shortly afterwards married. In person he was handsome and inspired confidence, although he could not look any one straight in the face.

At forty (610) he retired to a cave in Mount Hera, three miles from Mecca, where he experienced dreams and visions—possibly the hallucinations of sight and hearing not uncommon to epileptics—which caused him to proclaim himself the Prophet of God.²

The Arab religion at this period was an animistic polytheism, including the worship of stones. The famous black stone, called the "Kaaba," a huge meteorite supposed to have fallen to earth from Paradise with Adam, was a special object of adoration at Mecca. The Mohammedans

¹ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Everyman ed., vol. v, p. 270. Gibbon appears to have regarded Mohammed with reverence, and would not allow anything to his disparagement.

² Asylum experience shows that religious mania is very common in epileptic insanity, the sufferers from which are fond of preaching in odd corners.

borrowed much from the Jews, with whom they came into frequent contact. Mohammed preached the "religion of Abraham," so presumably the Allah of the Moslem is identical with the Yahweh of the Jew; the one seems as self-laudatory in the Koran as is the other in the Old Testament. Indeed, much of the sayings of Allah in the sacred book of Islam reads somewhat like the proclamation of a vain-glorious Eastern monarch. According to Mohammed, Allah had sent six prophets to earth to acclaim him: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and himself. The last Prophet of God enjoined men to live a good life and to strive to please Allah by the triple effort of prayer, charity, and fasting. He sternly forbade the fashioning of images of any living thing (hence the Mohammedans have no pictorial or sculptured art of that kind), ordained mercy for the feeble and the fatherless, and abstinence from gambling, tobacco, and intoxicants. He was uncompromisingly monotheistic, and condemned the doctrine of the trinity as infidel.¹

Mohammed's first converts were his personal friends, and for some time he was derided, reviled, and bitterly attacked. His wife Cadijah died, he fell into poverty, and a plot was formed to take his life. A spy (according to tradition, an angel) revealed the conspiracy, and he fled from Mecca to Medina. This flight, which occurred in 622, was the turning-point in his career. The year is called that of the *Hegira*, and from it the Moslems compute their dates. Welcomed at Medina, he made many converts, and became a warrior. Ten years later he returned to Mecca at the head of an army, and henceforth he enforced his faith with the sword. He subjugated Mecca, a place which, as the cradle of the

¹ "They surely are infidels who say, 'God is the third of three'; for there is no God but one God: and if they refrain not from what they say, a grievous chastisement shall light on such of them as are infidels" (*Koran*, Sura v, "The Table," v. lxxvii).

Arab race, was a holy city long before Mohammed was born. Later he returned to Medina, and in 632 died, in his sixty-second year, from a fever which he himself believed was due to poison. His death was the occasion of deep grief and some consternation, as numbers of his people believed him to be immortal. He was buried at Medina.

The Koran, the sacred book of Islam, was wholly the work of Mohammed, and is regarded by the Moslems as inspired and eternal. It consists of 114 chapters (or "Suras"), dictated by him to scribes, and contains the revelations he believed he had received when in the cave at Mount Hera. He guarded against the possible later corruption of his text by such warnings as:—

"Woe to those who with their own hands transcribe the Book corruptly, and then say, 'This is from God,' that they may sell it for some mean price! Woe then to them for that which their hands have written! and, Woe to them for the gains which they have made!"

The Koran suffers in translation from the pure and magnificent Arabic in which it is written. It is difficult to select passages for quotation here, but the following will give some conception of the vigour of its language and the soundness of its ethic:—

"Woe to those who stint the measure: who, when they take by measure from others, exact the full; but when they mete to them or weight to them, minish—What! have they no thought that they shall be raised again for the great day?"

"Perish the liars, who are bewildered in the depths of *ignorance*!"

"My Lord! bestow on me wisdom, and join me to the just, and give me a good name among posterity."

"What! Canst thou then make the deaf to hear, or guide the blind and him who is in palpable error?"

"Man prayeth for evil as he prayeth for good; for man is hasty."

“The fate of every man have I bound about his neck.”

“And touch not the substance of the orphan, unless in an upright way, till he attain his age of strength; and perform your covenant. Verily the covenant shall be inquired of.”

“Give freely for the cause of God, and throw not yourselves with your own hands into ruin; and do good, for God loveth those who do good.”

“Verily, they who give alms, both men and women, and they who lend a generous loan to God—doubled shall it be to them; and they shall have a noble compromise.”

“O Believers! avoid frequent suspicions, for some suspicions are a crime; and pry not: neither let the one of you traduce another in his absence. Would any one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely ye would loathe it. And fear ye God: for God is ready to turn, merciful.”

Finally, comparison may be made between the saying of Abou Bekr, Mohammed's son-in-law, with the practice of a country, professedly Christian, which recently incurred the disgust and condemnation of its opponents:—

“Be just: the unjust never prosper. Be valiant: die rather than yield. Be merciful: slay neither old men, children, nor women. Destroy neither fruit trees, grain, nor cattle. Keep your word, even to your enemies.”

§ 11. *Summary and Conclusion*

A brief summary must now be made of the foregoing pages. Therein the world's great religious systems have been surveyed, and some account has been given of the evolution of the religious ideas which led up to them. First came Naturism, in which there is merely a vague conception of some mysterious, impalpable, impersonal power behind every event of life. Then man passed through Animism, which assigns to every object, animate and inanimate, a personal spirit—the only explanation of

natural phenomena possible to the slowly developing mind of primitive man. From these beginnings emerged later the elaborate systems of Egypt, Chaldæa, India, and the other mighty civilizations of the past. From what has been said in Chapters I to IV it will be gathered that the mental processes of man have been no more exempt from the influence of evolution than has his body or have the bodies of other animals. The gradual unfolding process of religious ideas has been the result of the evolution of man's psychic faculties, and can be traced, by the comparison of what is known of his past history with the results of the study of existing primitive races, practically from the dawn of speech through man's dominant characteristic of inquiry.

It will also have been gathered that the general line of thought has been much the same all over the world, and that certain leading ideas have been prominently developed. These leading ideas are:—

1. The conception of the sun as the controlling power, or deity.
2. The conception of vegetation-gods, and, through these by natural thought sequence, the sacrifice of saviour gods for the special benefit of mankind.
3. The conception of a life after death.

Side by side with these has gone on the accumulation of what may be called "stock myths," which have been applied repeatedly in every great religion—e.g., immaculate conceptions, virgin births, cave births, miracles, etc.

In many cases the acquisition of certain arts and crafts, the origin of which had become lost sight of in a few generations (for antiquity does not stand for a very long period of time with primitive man), has been ascribed to certain gods or culture heroes, who may have been wholly fabulous in some instances, or may have actually existed as great teachers who became deified. These benefactors were regarded as *teaching gods*, and in many cases they have been amalgamated with *saviour gods*.

All religions have two aspects—ceremonial and ethical. The ceremonial part consists of ritual, prayer, and sacrifice. This aspect of religion has generally passed into the control of a special priesthood, which has, for interested reasons not unconnected with lust for power and revenue, exploited it as a potent instrument for playing upon the superstitious fears of the uneducated and unthinking mass of the people by appealing to their sensuous feelings. This part of a religion has often become its greatest blot, allowing free play to the most gross intolerance, cruelty, and oppression.¹ To it, on the other hand, music, drama, and other arts have owed in great part their development.

It may be said with justice that a powerful priesthood has never worked for the good of humanity. Reform has always come from the outside, either by the efforts of a powerful and enlightened ruler (in which case, as in that of Akh-na-ten, it has not always been permanent), or from the evolution of public opinion. It was the growth of public opinion and not the efforts of the Church that reformed the poor law, just as it was the growth of public opinion that abolished the terrible human sacrifices of the South American religions in the face of a bloodthirsty priesthood. It is only when it realizes that its power is seriously threatened that a priesthood bows to reform. An historical case of comparatively recent date may be cited as an example. It was not the Church, the supposed instrument for the teaching of a gospel of love and mercy, that abolished torture in England; it was the intrepid courage of a fanatic. When John Felton had assassinated Buckingham in 1628, he was questioned by Archbishop Laud in order to make him incriminate others. Threatened impatiently by the minister of Jesus with "You must confess or go to the

¹ "So great the evils to which religion could prompt!" says Lucretius (book i).

rack," Felton coolly replied: "If I am racked, my Lord, I may happen to incriminate your Lordship." The Primate, alarmed, referred the matter to the king, who ordered Felton to be tortured to the full extent the law allowed; and it was found that torture did not come within the power of English law. From that time, the rack and other instruments in the Tower lay idle and rusting.¹ It should be remembered that it was from the Church that the greatest opposition to the doctrine of Evolution and the introduction of chloroform came, and that, finding itself powerless to stay progress, it is now, in the case of Evolution, in the process of performing a solemn *volte face*.

The ethical part of religion has been due less to the religion itself than to the carefully reasoned thoughts of men of higher intellect. What is especially noteworthy is that the highest ethic runs upon practically similar lines in all ages and in all quarters of the globe. The greatest ethic of all is the Golden Rule of reciprocity, and this is traceable from very early historic times as the product of the social faculty. The ethic of Ancient Egypt, as has been shown by quotations from the *Book of the Dead*, was as sublime as any belonging to modern times.

The next point for attention is the development of sacred writings, or "scriptures," and the fact that every such writing has been claimed to be "inspired." The only inspiration comes from the best of man's thought, the product of his brain cells. It may be said truly, therefore, that intellect and inspiration are one and the same, and that every great thinker is inspired, whether his writings be "sacred" or "profane." There are as great thoughts in the following lines of Shakespeare and Tennyson as any to be found in the Bible or in the quotations already given from the various scriptures:—

¹ General Younghusband, *The Tower of London from Within*, p. 231.

This above all : to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

(Hamlet.)

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.

(Macbeth.)

I hold it truth of him who sings
To one clear harp, in divers tones,
That men may rise, on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves, to higher things.

(In Memoriam.)

In Chapters V to VIII were traced the processes by which the Old and New Testaments, which together form our Bible, were built up. For this purpose the early history of the Jews and of the rise and progress of Christianity required to be sketched, and some inquiry was made in addition into the myths of other peoples. The conclusions necessarily drawn from this study may be thus set out :—

In the case of the Old Testament it was shown that the books of which it is composed were drawn from different sources at different ages, and that the materials were so badly edited that numerous contradictions and discrepancies are apparent even to a casual observer. It was also shown that the contents of the books comprise the history (often falsified to suit the purposes of a powerful priesthood), traditions, laws, and poetry of the Jews, together with certain myth material borrowed from the civilizations with which they came in contact.

In the case of the New Testament there were indications of two separate parts—a teaching section and a biographical section; the former containing the exposition of a metaphysical dogma of belief (the “Logos”) which reflected largely the general direction of thought of the age in which it was written, interpolated freely by later authors in order to reconcile its teachings with subsequent developments. This teaching was adapted rather to the intellectual minority than to the uneducated majority. For the latter there was the biographical section, represented by the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. This was proved to be dubious as to its history, to contain discrepancies both of narrative and of chronology when compared with contemporary records, together with many of the stock myths alluded to above and passages adapted wholesale from earlier Jewish literature.

In addition there was an apocalyptic book of evident Jewish origin, but showing ample traces of adaptation to Christian needs.

Before the results of such an inquiry all claim to inspiration in the sense in which the theologian understands the word completely disappears. The Bible is no more “inspired” than the Koran, the Zendavesta, or any other sacred book; no more, indeed, than the Odyssey or “Evangeline.” The question, therefore, inevitably arises: In what way can the Bible be studied in order that it may yield pleasure and profit to the earnest student? The reply is simple. It can be studied with delight for its simple, rugged beauty, and as the poetic literature of a great people with whose history the world would be but scantily acquainted had its scriptures not been preserved. It can be studied as a mine of folklore, myth, tradition, and ancient social laws, and as an example of the evolution of religion. Finally, it can be studied for the edification afforded by its ethical teachings, and, making due allowance for discrepancies and contradictions in the light of social

evolution, as a guide to right living; especially if it be thus taken in the same broad way that one would pursue with the ethical teachings in other writings, whether religious or secular; that is to say, such a study must be made upon strict lines of comparative ethics.

It may be thought that criticism of the kind which has been followed in these pages is wholly destructive; that, leaving nothing in its stead, it deprives mankind of a religion which should be a shining light to guide them in their search for better things, and to indicate the way to the highest form of right living. Emphatically this is not so. Rather does it clear away the briars and weeds in which man's best work has been entangled and too often choked, and point the high road to future progress. The blood-stained records of Christianity show, unfortunately, that its most ardent professors have too often been intolerant, ruthless, narrow—in a word, grossly unethical.

The only royal road for human progress lies in the disentanglement of man from the rank growth of degrading superstitions which have so long impeded him, and in the uncompromising search after truth, as exemplified in the methods of science and the clear comprehension of the highest ethic. Such an ideal may not be immediately obtainable, but its realization at no very distant date is reasonably certain if the right means be adopted. When the slow and gradual evolution of humanity during long ages is remembered, there is, indeed, good ground for optimism. "Those million years of early human development.....were only a prelude.....According to the best estimates of mathematicians, man will remain on this earth for something more than ten million years yet. At the rate at which we have gone for the last hundred years, this period of time opens out a prospect of such happy developments as are beyond the capacity of the liveliest imagination. *We* are the factors of evolution to-day. We are the masters

and the creators. Let us get the plan right and forge ahead."¹

What is the plan that must be got right in order that mankind must forge ahead? If one may be allowed to prophesy, it will be that man must treat religion as he treats an ore. When the latter is dealt with, the metal is separated from the matrix, and refined again and again until the pure element alone remains, free from dross. By the application of this process to religion, the ores of different creeds and faiths, analysed by criticism, will be smelted in the furnace of reason. Thus the gold of ethic will be separated from the matrix of primitive dross, formed of anthropomorphic gods, superstition, and magic, and held together by sacerdotalism; and it will be refined by the use of experience. For such a development in the ages yet left to man there must be right education. Right education will lie in the universal teaching of the *truth* about things; the instruction of all youth, without distinction of classes, in the true knowledge of the things around them, of the making of the earth, of their relation to other forms of life, and of the evolution of the race both bodily and mental. Finally, there will be instruction in ethics, not in theory alone, but in theory concurrently with practice. Only in such perfect knowledge can be found perfect happiness; and such education must be international. The old destructive and obstructive professions will no longer be the ruling ones; they will disappear, giving place to the two callings which, being constructive, must be reckoned as the highest—the Teaching and the Healing. When it is recognized that the vast sums now wasted upon armaments and churches could be better employed upon right education and charity, the goal will be in sight, even though far off.

To those who argue that we would deprive man of God and the hope of eternal life, it may be answered:

¹ Joseph McCabe, *The A B C of Evolution*, p. 106.

First, that man's best claim to immortality lies in works that bring with them the blessings and acclamations of his fellows; and, second, that man may both profess and live up to the finest creed without bringing a Deity into question. That man can die, and die willingly and composedly, without the supposed blessings of religion and the "sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection," has been proved by Socrates, Seneca, and many another great mind before and since; aye, and by men of humbler intellect than they. In modern times there can be no more striking example than that to be found in the noble letters of the gentle lady whose eloquent and modest *Words in Pain*¹ were written during years of hopeless suffering, and with the full knowledge that they were penned under the slowly deepening shadow of death. Men have lived good and blameless lives in spite of religion; as witness the following passage from Mr. McCabe's "Creed of a Rationalist"²:—

"Let your life be as happy and sunshiny as you can make it. Have the good sense to find a joy in work as well as in play. Hurt no man—especially no girl or child, or you deserve the cat. Be sober. Do not invite headaches on the morrow. Resent injustice and lying, for the good of all. Smite humbugs and sordid and selfish people joyfully, until the brood is extinct. Be honourable, truthful, and kind; for honour, truth, and kindness are basic conditions of a healthy and happy time for the human family. Cultivate refinement, for it doubles one's capacity for happiness. Cherish wisdom and dread illusion; for the paths of life are slippery with the blood and tears of the unwise. Beware of verbiage. Keep a strong and self-conscious personality; for there are too many people ready to exploit it. Fear neither God nor devil nor priest nor boggy-man, but help to make your

¹ Now issued by Watts & Co.; 3s. 3d.

² *The Literary Guide*, No. 291, p. 129.

fellows such that you can walk cheerfully and helpfully with them to the end of the road. Do unto others as you would that they would do unto you."

No faith can offer a better creed than this. But, as Huxley said, "it is an error to imagine that evolution signifies a constant tendency to increased perfection,"¹ and man may retrogress, as he has, to some extent, done before. Yet, even if one adopts this more pessimistic view of things, the uncompromising pursuit of truth still offers the best prospect for mankind. To educate our youth as has been suggested, to inculcate the Golden Rule as a line of conduct far above the theology of the "two-and-seventy jarring sects," cannot but make for their greater health and happiness.

¹ *Evolution and Ethics* (Macmillan ; 1903), p. 199.

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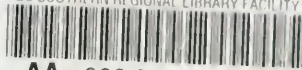
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